

***The Sweetest Little Thing***  
**Owens Art Gallery, 14 February 2009**

Virgil Hammock

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Volume 52, Number 214, Supplement, Spring 2009

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/61906ac>

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Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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Cite this review

Hammock, V. (2009). Review of [*The Sweetest Little Thing* / Owens Art Gallery, 14 February 2009]. *Vie des Arts*, 52(214), 13–13.

SAKVILLE, NB

# The Sweetest Little Thing

Virgil Hammock

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61 York St.  
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14 February 2009

This was the tenth year for the Owens Art Gallery and Struts Gallery's, annual fund raising event *The Sweetest Little Thing* which is always held on Valentine's Day. Artists from across the country donate small, and in most cases very small, works that are sold through a silent art auction. This year there were one hundred thirty works donated to the auction. When the event started a decade ago at Struts, Sackville's artists ran space, there were about thirty pieces, almost all from local artists, but it was a good idea then and it's an even better one now. Its success is mainly due to the hard work of Struts's long time director, John Murchie, whose golden tongue seems to be able to convince well-known artists from across the country to give works to cause of his gallery.

Since that first event, ten years ago, *The Sweetest Little Thing* has moved to the larger quarters of Mount Allison's Owens Art Gallery and is now a benefit for both institutions as well as the Faucet Media Arts Centre which is ran out the downtown Struts facility. The result has become

one of Sackville's premier social events cramming the gallery with a mix of professors, students, town's people and some people from as far away as Halifax. It is a great mix and brings people into the gallery that ordinarily wouldn't be there. Why to so many people come to this event? Because *The Sweetest Little Thing* is the fun event of the year in Sackville.

Art gallery fund raisers tend sometimes to be boring, the idle rich being idle; or for insiders, folks in black; and sometimes both, but not this event which mixes art works with a bake sale and dance and still make a considerable sum for the galleries concerned. The worst events are those in small community art galleries where local artist donate their art work then turn around and buy each other's work at below market value. A much better plan would just have the artists give the gallery the same money and then they would at least get a tax receipt. Ideally the best way to make money for art galleries is to separate other people willingly from their money and this seems to be



what *The Sweetest Little Thing* does in spades.

Visitors look at works donated for the silent art auction. Courtesy the Owens Art Gallery

The artists do donate their works to the cause, but they in turn have exhibited in the past at the Owens or Struts and have a soft spot in their hearts for the galleries. The pieces are generally very small, indeed minute, but there are works by the like of Eric Walker, Bruce Barber, Anna Torma, Herménégilde Chiasson, George Zimpel, Roger Savage, Jennifer Boyle, Dawn McNutt and Eric Cameron. While the art works are central to the night's events what many are looking forward to is the before

mentioned bake sale or as it called here 'Cake Walk'. Local artists and others bake their hearts out to produce art themed cakes. The results range from the beautiful to the truly bizarre. □