

VISUAL ARTS

The zen of post-conceptual art



R.M. VAUGHAN
THE EXHIBITIONIST
rvaughan@globeandmail.com

Liss Platt at MKG127
Until Feb. 4, 127 Ossington Ave.,
Toronto; mkg127.com

One of my 2012 resolutions is to be more patient. I even have a role model: post-conceptual (more on that later) artist Liss Platt. When not collaborating in the media-fusing collective Shake-n-Make, Platt creates dizzying, large-scale works based on Spirograph patterns, plus slow-mo, deep look/deeper study Super 8 films. Forget patient; Platt is a zen monk staring at a mountain and waiting for it to blink first.

Platt's work is grounded in, and fuelled by, elaborate literary and mathematical systems, precisely calculated schemes for readings of reality (that's the "conceptual" part), but is ultimately more interested in material results than theories (that's the "post" part). Thus, her work appeals to the theoretically minded as well as the visual pleasure seeker.

To wit, Platt's latest exhibition, *Constant*, at MKG127: a visual diary of a summer spent observing, then re-observing, recording then re-recording, a single object suspended in place while the world around it shifts. The object turned subject is a humble one – a swimming raft anchored in a cove, little more than a banged together flat bed of wood resting on the water. What could be more mundanely Canadian?

Or, conversely, profoundly Canadian? Under Platt's observation, everything beside, above, and beneath the raft is in constant flux, from the clouds to the tides, creating an abundance of visual information. Looking at her dozens of time-lapse photographic captures – framed together in blocks of images – one witnesses shifts from flat water and clear skies to churning water and fat-bellied skies, and everything in between.

The raft, apart from the different grades of sunlight reflected on its surface, remains unchanged, like the proverbial stoic mountain. And the colours Platt finds in the water and the sky – from eggplant purple to orchid pink to linen white to jade green – are unabashedly lovely.

Take your time with these images, move slowly between the burbling waves and bubbling, chunky-to-razor-thin, colour-changing clouds. Your efforts will be well rewarded.

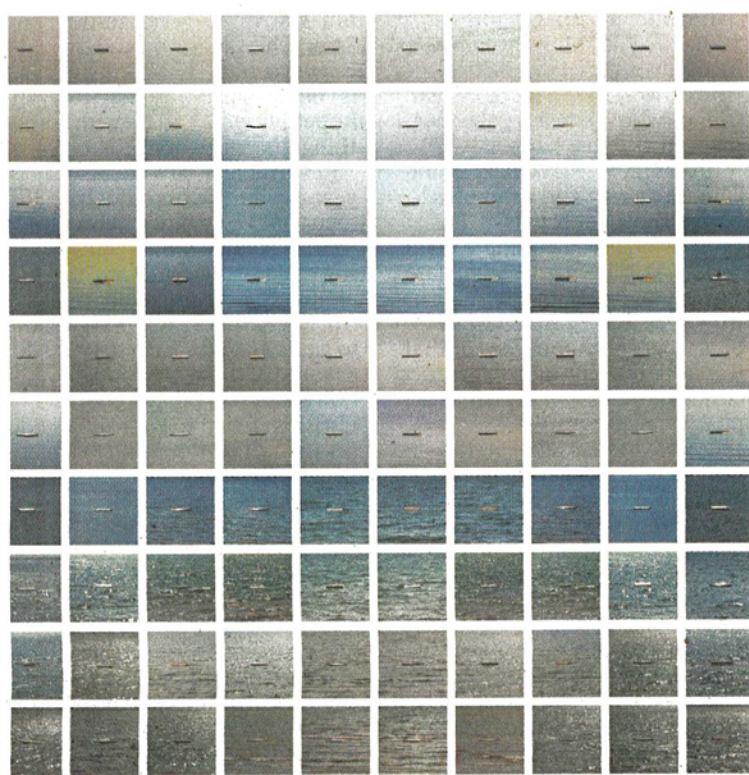
Martha Eleen & Mary Catherine Newcomb at Loop Gallery
Until Jan. 29, 1273 Dundas St. W.,
Toronto; loopgallery.ca

Member-run Loop Gallery's new show, a pairing of separate sets of works by painter Martha Eleen and sculptor Mary Catherine Newcomb, may, at first, appear dissonant.

Eleen's diary-like suite of oils on wood, depicting the day-to-day life of her differently-abled son Gabe, and Newcomb's collection of modified natural objects, including a massive sculpture of a rabbit made of live grass and moss, are, well, an odd couple.

But I like odd. I like finding commonalities even more.

In Eleen's work, the tender, maternal impulse is rendered via a painting technique that is anything but tender. Eleen scratches, scrapes, scribbles over and builds up her surfaces like a



Platt's rich images create an abundance of visual information and reward close attention. PHOTO COURTESY OF MKG127

works, highly rewarding – one learns to see the subtexts, as manifested by all that relentless texture.

As you make your way down the gallery toward Newcomb's works, continue to consider Eleen's tactile push-pull between admiration and resignation, and the metaphors it enlivens, and note how Newcomb's sculptures superficially read as whimsical but soon resonate with darker messages. Again, there are underlying tensions.

Newcomb's central pieces, a prayer rug and a giant rabbit, are both made with sod and sprout long, bouncy blades of grass. So far, so cheerful.

Except, in the case of the prayer rug, where Newcomb has laid a cut-out over the surface, creating brown patterns, or, in the case of the rabbit, where it is pocked with husks and rot. The sculptures speak simultaneously of growth and fulfilment and, upon inspection, deprivation and spoilage.

Subliminal trap setters, Newcomb and Eleen make a good team.

IN OTHER VENUES

Max Dean at Nicholas Metivier Gallery
Until Jan. 28, 451 King St. W.,
Toronto

Dean's absurdist photographs play like frozen performance pieces, investigations into the silliness of materialism and the potential silliness of investigating materialism. Dean is a the Buster Keaton of self-portraiture.

Secret Gardens at Lillian H. Smith Library
Until March 3, 239 College St.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, the library presents a tidy selection of Burnett-inspired book plates and hidden garden illustrations. Relive your childhood, for free.

R.M. Vaughan

"MY WEEK WITH MARILYN" IS PROUD TO BE A
**GOLDEN GLOBE® NOMINEE FOR
BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR!**

AND HAS NOW BEEN
HONORED WITH
**THE MOST BRITISH
ACADEMY AWARD
LONGLIST NODS
WITH 16, INCLUDING
BEST FILM
OF THE
YEAR!**



my week with

MARILYN

NOW PLAYING! Check Theatre Directory for Locations & Showtimes.

**"VIBRANTLY ALIVE!
POTENTLY MOVING AND HEARTFELT!
ADEPERO ODUYE IS UNFORGETTABLE.
A STAR IS BORN."**

PETER TRAVERS

The New York Times
**"EXPERIENCE THE
THRILL OF DISCOVERY."**

A.O. SCOTT

San Francisco Chronicle

★★★★★

AMY BIANCOLLI

WINNER
FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION AWARD
NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW
WINNER
BREAKTHROUGH DIRECTOR
DEE REES
GOTHAM AWARDS

MUST LIST
Entertainment
FRESH
Tomatoes

PARIAH
[puh-rah-yuh] noun 1. A person without status 2. A rejected member of society 3. An outcast
PariahMovie.com
YouTube.com/AllianceFilms
Facebook.com/AllianceFilms

EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT NOW PLAYING!
Showtimes Daily 3:45 6:00 8:15 10:45 Sat/Sun Mats 11:15 & 1:30 * DIGITAL SOUND

AMC THEATRES
YONGE & DUNDAS 24
10 DUNDAS ST. E. • 416-977-2262

**THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL WOMAN OF HER TIME.
THE MOST CELEBRATED ACTRESS OF OUR TIME.**

GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE

BEST ACTRESS
MERYL STREEP IS...

"MIRACULOUS"

Charles McGrath The New York Times

"EXCELLENT"

Jessica Winter TIME

**"A PLEASURE TO
BEHOLD"**

Lisa Schwarzbaum Entertainment



**SCREEN ACTORS
GUILD AWARD**

BEST ACTRESS MERYL STREEP

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
NEW YORK FILM CRITICS CIRCLE
NEW YORK FILM CRITICS ONLINE
SOUTHEASTERN FILM CRITICS
ASSOCIATION

**CRITICS' CHOICE
AWARD**

BEST ACTRESS MERYL STREEP

MERYL STREEP
The
IRON LADY

THEIRONLADY.CA PG-13 VIOLENCE ALLIANCE

NOW PLAYING! Check Theatre Directory for Showtimes. * DIGITAL SOUND