

## **Bringing New Zing To King**

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King and Spadina has changed incredibly over the past decade. Back in the '90s, few lived there, or wanted to. Now, it's where condos and warehouse conversions meet neon nightclubs and green retailers. Ad execs power-lunch at high-end grocer Fresh & Wild while web developers stretch out their carpal tunnel down the street at Totum Fitness. Granted, with some residents yelping over clubland noise and streetcar right-of-way, the evolution of these contrasts isn't always a happy one. But it sure does make for some interesting gallery-going. Sip an espresso-spiked smoothie, and come along.

### 1. Leo Kamen Gallery

80 Spadina Ave., Suite 406

Over at the high-ceilinged Kamen Gallery (which has been in the nabe since 1985) veteran Toronto painter John Kissick's canvases shine and bulge with frenetic col-our. Conjuring the shapes of sign-age, toys and logos without quite defining them, Kissick's thickly layered abstractions are at once enjoyable and mysterious, coarse and fine. And though they may not be a hit with those who prefer his more muted-palette stages of yore, these paintings are terrific, a testament to a creativity and energy that survives art-world cynicism and dry philosophical rationale. As a call to enjoying what the artist terms a "raw experience of looking," these canvases are carnivalesque and silly in the best way. One only wishes, perhaps, that there was more variety; it seems strange that such a "slippery, messy" process as Kissick's turns out such rigidly consistent results.

### 2. Ryerson Gallery

80 Spadina Ave., Suite 305

While the Ryerson Gallery usually showcases student photography, the current exhibition, which includes prints from many famous street photographers, is anything but. "The Public Stage" has pics from several international marquee names -- At-get, Cartier-Bresson, Levitt and Friedlander -- as well as some from closer-to-home Canadian talent such as Michel Lambeth and Gabor Szilasi. Seeing Lambeth's 1950s Toronto and Szilasi's 1980s Montreal side by side with Atget's Paris and Levitt's New York conjures fresh associations for us Canucks: What myths might our own iconic urban imagery spawn, if we were to take a closer look at it, or see it more often and more prominently? For this and other insights, the Ryerson students who curated the show (using selections from their school's Mira Godard Study Centre) should get much more than a passing grade.

### 3. Nicholas Metivier Gallery

451 King St. W.

It's double-takes all around at Nicholas Metivier's current exhibit "Twice Removed," which features Ed Burtynsky's landscape photos of the 1980s in both original print form and as reinterpreted by painter Brent Mc-Intosh. The highlight here is really the Burtynsky pics. Of course, being a prairie girl myself, his swirling grasses and muddy fields really induce that old punctum-pang for me. But beyond that, there's a strange realization: Despite the inherent lushness and surface texture of McIntosh's medium, Burtynsky's precise, flat prints seem to offer more visual luxury. You can get up close to them and examine each detail, each leaf and bootprint, whereas McIntosh's paintings seem a bit muddled up close, and are best viewed from far away. Take a look (or two, or four) and decide which you prefer.

Credit: National Post