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## Vancouver Exhibition Reviews

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Cristall Gallery, Vancouver**John Kissick, No. 2, 2007, oil and acrylic on canvas,  
66" x 66".

concentrates each form into a brushstroke, shape or spill on the canvas, and further distills the resulting vibrant colours by applying a self-leveling resin to evoke the plastic, manufactured quality of the detritus around us.

Swirls and vortexes merging with multi-faceted crystalline growths are part of Melanie Authier's investigation into the emotional aspects of landscape painting. They are a sidelong glance at the conventions of painting, and definitions of beauty and the sublime. Inspired by the physical phenomena of icebergs, glaciers and tropical underwater environments, they seek to represent another realm altogether, one that feels precarious and overwhelming.

Where Authier's sinuous contours have an otherworldly feel, John Kissick's visceral brushstrokes writhe like intestinal folds. He counteracts what he refers to as 'opticality' — where an illusion starts to emerge, it is broken by the contrast of what is contiguous to it. Extrusive lines weave among flat shapes and dot patterns, and his use of paint plants the work firmly in the material world of abstraction.

Martin Golland's piece, *Cactus*, is a close-up view of a houseplant with blue and grey archways in the background. Golland blends the real with the imagined, pushing the viewer right up against the plant, as if in a game of hide and seek. There is no arbitrariness about his choice of subject matter — he might take hundreds of photographs for one painting in order to engage multiple viewpoints. The depicted space, where the foreground switches with the background, achieves a slightly hallucinatory effect.

Successful students are often the products of good teachers, and each artist in *Cartographies* is either a professor or a recent graduate of the University of Guelph. The Masters program there is rigorous, one where, as graduate Martin Golland suggests, the timid artist would be out of place. While the work of each artist in this show is distinctly individual, there resides in each work an unmistakable affection for paint paired with a process that involves both accumulating and dissolving tangible subject matter, and the results are stunning.

Organizer Pete Smith has been the force behind the show, and his fresh energy shows in his own work, which culls from the visual debris that constantly bombards urbanites, such as graffiti and advertising. He

Pete Smith, *Tiresome Syndication*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 60"  
x 48".



Monica Tap, *Marina*, 2005, oil on canvas, 50" x 60".

An awareness of history is most evident in the work of Monica Tap, who purposely degenerates specific locales based on the life of Canadian painter Homer Watson using low-resolution video. The results, in *White Pine* and *Marina*, are compressed landscapes reinvigorated by Tap's brushstrokes.



Melanie Authier, *Perch*, 2007, oil on canvas, 20" x 16".

—BY Helena Wadsley

Not only are these artists influenced by their environments, whether natural or altered, they each reveal an intensely analytical awareness of painting's history, and each brushstroke responds eloquently and volubly. There is an ongoing conversation amongst these works, but both Kissick and Smith insist that any similarity among the group is due to physical proximity. Any pedagogical relationship is downplayed, and rightfully so. All five painters consider themselves to be professional artists and colleagues but, while there is a very faint wisp of competitiveness, there is also support.

In a Renaissance painting workshop, apprentices would gain skill by emulating the masters, gradually emerging as masters themselves. Though this system is archaic, there is much to be said for working closely with those who share similar investigative practices.



Martin Golland, *Cactus*, 2007, oil on canvas, 44.5" x 39.5".