

## Ivan Jurakic's Top 3: Outstanding in Ontario

Various locations Jan to Dec 2010



John Kissick

*Groovefucker No. 3* 2009 Courtesy Leo Kamen Gallery / photo Robert McNair

### **1. John Kissick: A Nervous Decade at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery**

The past year has featured a number of solid mid-career survey exhibitions so in preparing these picks I started to think about shows that really opened up an artist's work for me—that made me linger and want to see more. I'm not an aficionado of abstraction but I've been a discreet fan of [Kissick](#)'s work for several years and this show really nailed it for me. I was immediately engrossed by the works' emancipatory giddiness. Kissick's unexpected mash-up of painterly abstraction and supergraphics packed a visual punch that put to rest any qualms I might have had about the continuing relevance of abstraction. In fact, Kissick seems to work through many of these same doubts, but finds their inner groove. There's an anxious swagger in the push-pull between the looseness and rigour of his application that nicely parallels the act of sampling or remixing dance tracks. [KWAG](#) curator Crystal Mowry took charge of these rhythms and sequenced Kissick's paintings into a unified whole. I'm in full agreement with guest essayist [Jason Lahr](#): *Groovefucker* may well be the greatest title for a series in the history of painting.



Shary Boyle *Vanity* 2009 *When the Bough Breaks* 2010 and *Scarecrow* 2010 Installation view Courtesy Jessica Bradley Art + Projects / photo Ian Lefebvre

## 2. [Shary Boyle: Flesh and Blood](#) at the Art Gallery of Ontario

I really fell for [Shary Boyle](#)'s work during the run up to the [2009 Sobey Award](#), so it was a thrill to see this exhibition and all of the new work that she'd produced since winning the [Gershon Iskowitz Prize](#) last year. This was a gorgeous show, and while her intimate porcelain sculptures are a real standout, the ambitious scale of several new sculptures cemented her reputation as an artist who really pushes her craft and who isn't willing to do anything by half measures. I've heard complaints that the exhibition was excluded from the contemporary galleries on the upper floors of the [AGO](#), but seeing as how Boyle's work relies so heavily on figuration, allegory and fine craft, it really benefited by being contextualized within the European galleries. Putting these surreal and often provocative works in the path of a public expecting to see historical artworks from the permanent collection paid off nicely and it was great to see a curator as prominent as [Louise Déry](#) taking on a survey of this talented Toronto artist's work.



David Hoffos *Scenes from the House Dream: Winter Kitchen* 2007  
Courtesy the artist

### **[3. David Hoffos: Scenes From The House Dream](#) at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art**

Lineups to see this show have been common, so I waited until mid-week to make my foray and was not disappointed. I've experienced a few of [Hoffos'](#) installations over the years, but this was a different beast entirely. [Shirley Madill](#) needs to be recognized for taking the helm of this essential and well-deserved retrospective. Barely contained by the main space at [MOCCA](#), the exhibition certainly didn't suffer from lack of content. If anything, a few of the freestanding works might have been excised, but that's just quibbling. I was an eager voyeur slinking through the darkness between dozens of miniature dioramas, adjusting my height so that the multiple reflections would sync up. It was terrific to see so many visual effects achieved using little more than low-tech monitors and reflective surfaces. I felt my joy slowly give way to foreboding after the first 20 minutes, but that's an integral aspect of the work. The sense of wonder in Hoffos' installations is always balanced by a much deeper sense of alienation lurking at their core. For all of their wizardry, it was this extraordinary sense of unease that stayed with me.

Ivan Jurakic is director/curator at the University of Waterloo Art Gallery.