Danielle Englesby 24252116

Visa 312 Artistic Research

Gary Pearson

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The tradition of painting has a rich and varied history- so extensive that one can find it overwhelming to attempt to place themselves amongst the multitude of both historical art figures and contemporary artists alike. As an art student one is taught learn from the masters but keep to a certain degree of originality; absorb the visual culture of current society but remain painfully aware of plagiarization. It is in my opinion the most difficult part of growing and finding ones-self as an artist- to figure out how to confidently stand on our own feet and decide with conviction not only where we fit categorically within our practice, but also where we stand apart from our peers and influences.

Stylistically speaking I believe that my current paintings are within the realm of semi-abstraction. From found imagery I selectively choose certain elements and recognizable structures to both simplify and manipulate the composition. Objects become basic shapes that are emphasized by colour and various forms of application techniques and/or paint materiality. When looking at current painters that have influenced my work, Peter Doig stands out in my mind as an artist that has been incredibly successful in terms of depicting a balance between the recognizable and intangible; his imagery has a mysterious narrative quality about it that almost alludes to a dream-like state. It tells a story- but not directly. It leaves ample room for interpretation and intrigue on the viewer’s behalf. Encompassing these elements within my work holds great importance to me and it is what I am currently attempting to accomplish.

Like many abstract painters such as Antoni Tapies, I let a certain amount of freedom and meditative mark-making guide my painting process. I layer, pour and build, remove and deconstruct repetitively until the piece reveals a certain level of clarity, and the feeling of the imagery reveals itself. Aside from initially planning the palette and composition, everything else is left to chance and open to mistakes. Generally speaking I don’t believe in “studies”. Practicing and planning the painting numerous times before creating the final piece takes away the importance experimentation as well as the element of chance that I enjoy so much about the creative process. My initial final painting goes through a series of stages (as studies would) as I build up numerous layers. The finished piece is usually barely recognizable when compared to the initial imagery.

My research is done through photography of my surrounding environment. Recently I have discovered what I am truly drawn to as an artist through what subject-matter I choose to record.

Previous to spending time exploring Kelowna’s landscape for exploring and expanding on the idea of the ‘local’, I believed that my main focus would most likely be people-people inhabiting the downtown urban core. It would be a way of searching for opportunities to portray individuals keeping up with the pace of contemporary living.

In actuality what I found most intriguing was the rural landscapes on the outskirts of Kelowna; ones completely void of people. I found myself taking pictures of odd things, like a piece of garbage in a field, or a stack of abandoned wood, or a fence, or a car. Much of it was automatic and seemed illogical until I looked back at my photographic research. I realized that what catches my attention the most about my local environment are the signifiers of inhabitants, and what is left behind or perhaps abandoned over time. How various man-made items conflict with or juxtapose the serenity of the natural landscape. The clash of industrial material within an organic environment creates and certain tension- a tension that inescapable these days due to perpetually expanding industrialism and the amount of waste generated by synthetic materials. I think the reason why I choose to record and in turn paint this imagery is that it is my only way of controlling and manipulating society’s current situation. I can’t begin to tackle the magnitude of the issue in reality, so why not attempt to turn the bleak into a colourful scenario detached from real life? Makes sense to me.