



Beaupre's entry in CCFM show illustrates the arms, legs of possibly the artist herself.

Beaupre's exhibition falls short of ambitions

By Randal McIlroy

Although any exhibition by a living and practising artist is really only a work in progress — medically speaking, the process stops when they do — some shows feel more transient than others. Winnipeg printmaker Gisele Beaupre's new entry at the CCFM is one.

Multiple Views feels more like a preamble than a statement. Her work is visually interesting and technically accomplished, but the ambitions attributed to her in the press release are not consonant with the results on the walls.

The text proposes a wry twist on the tradition of femininity as a quality viewed and thus defined by the male artist. Drawn from six plates, the 16 prints illustrate the legs, and occasionally the arms and hands, of a subject who from this perspective seems to be the artist herself.

Press release

Or perhaps himself, one could say, since the clothed figure is androgynous.

That the figure is a woman, in fact Beaupre herself, is clear only from the press release — there was no annotation of any sort in the gallery last week when I checked in — and that weakens the punch.

Much more interesting from the theoretical axis is this idea of the artist drawing herself, a convenience tinged with solipsism. Still, the exhibition is too small as it stands to offer much for speculation.

There's still much to enjoy in how she does it. Beaupre draws beautifully, and uses the repetition of images as a springboard for her keen sense of variety.

One series of three begins with the subject working on a drawing of a submissive but watchful fe-

REVIEW

Multiple Views, Gisele Beaupre, le Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, 340 Provencher Boulevard, to Nov. 30; Shirley Brown, Manitoba Studio Series, Winnipeg Art Gallery, 300 Memorial Boulevard, to Nov. 23.

series, the artist is still poised with the pen but is contemplating a solid turquoise void. The paisley patterns on the carpet and table in another series change so vibrantly they could be isolated cells from a psychedelic film strip.

Print partner

The ideas warrant extended research. The Cyclops impresses as a provocatively rich symbol for the knowingly suppressed. In Splitz and its print partner, Navel Gazing, the two strongest images in the show, the same figure appears to be tearing itself free from the fearsome symmetry of an enraged, saw-toothed, vaguely ape-like woman.

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Within a remarkably short time, Deloraine artist Shirley Brown has found her technique and her voice.

The six large oils-on-plywood in her latest show, mounted in the Winnipeg Art Gallery as the latest instalment of the WAG's Manitoba Studio Series, offer more evidence for the case that Brown is becoming an individual and authentic prairie voice.

No fooling. Her foreboding, at times almost biblical visions of drive-in movie screens bearing cinematic or genuine disasters, capture the fabled perpetual plains and infinite skies that are as much a part of the genre as grain

here). Hers is a confrontational depiction of man's insignificance against nature in such a vast, unsheltered arena.

This time, the trademark tornadoes take second place to her fascination with those huge outdoor movie screens that thrilled her as a teenager in the '50s and '60s. "I was a complete movie fanatic," she writes.

Those screens work like the chromakey 'windows' of television — one rectangle within another — to open parallel and contemporary realities, mostly of the dark and foreboding kind.

The prairie landscape is thus intersected by a jungle war (It's a Jungle Out There), a downed and flaming dirigible ("O, this is Terrible"), the Bates home from Psycho (Norman's House) and Atlanta in flames (Gone with the Wind). In TBA the screen is blank, yet monumental even in daylight.

Filmic fiction

It's more than mere juxtaposition that motivates these paintings. In Gone with the Wind, a real tornado is brewing behind the projection of that southern calamity. The danger is always there, and Brown's depictions of cinematic destruction (the gory flames, the swelling smoke so thick you almost choke on it) are ever likely to leap off the screen.

She works big, and it's easy to imagine her as the painterly edition of the epic novelist, rubbing her hands in gleeful anticipation of all that space to fill.

She fills it well, not just by scale but by composition, especially in It's a Jungle Out There, where an unusual overhead perspective turns the screen into a diagonal slash across the picture as a metaphor for the intrusion of a filmic fiction in a land short on ro-