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Beauty of the Yukon

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Gavin Lynch // Stephan Boissonneault

Journeying the landscapes of Canada's northern treasure

With a creative fusion of words, portraits, and landscape, Gavin Lynch's *Land of the Midnight Sun* exhibit tells the bright, but somewhat hidden story of the Yukon wilderness. Lynch journeyed to the Yukon with his family during last year's summer solstice and camped around various wildlife to find inspiration for his exhibit.

"I'm from Northern BC and I've kind of always been about dealing with the history of the north through landscape, so I wanted to create a portrait of the Yukon with a series," Lynch says. As you walk inside the gallery, you are greeted with a massive portrait of the Yukon's Tombstone Park. Due to the voluminous hills creating a depth to the piece, the perspective makes you feel like you're actually standing on top one of the hills.

"This show formally became more about deep space and perspective and the idea of how you enter a picture," Lynch says as he walks through the exhibit. "The scale is very deliberate and the paintings are all specific to where your eyes would be."

While many would think of a desolate tundra landscape when hearing the word Yukon, much of the northern territory's landscape is filled with lush vegetation.

"Not only that, but there's so many little microcosms of these little, hardy plants that survive the winter," he says.

Further down the gallery, there is another sizable portrait of gleaming, coniferous trees reflecting off an abstract body of water. "This one is more or less of a dream space I was thinking of when I was there. I've never seen a sky like this," Lynch says while pointing to the portrait's sky that could be described as a luminous, putrid yellow. At first glance, Lynch's portraits may derive from the traditional oil and acrylic painting style, but with a closer look, some of the more intricate details like the razor sharp, inventive, glowing trees, are incomparable to other paintings.

It all comes to Lynch's creative process, which is an amalgamation of painting styles and sheer discovery. "I don't like to give away too many secrets, but a lot of it is achieved through stencilling and taping," Lynch says. "Originally I thought of it as a collage of using different painting styles and breaking up the picture plane. It's a wacky process and almost a kind of a backwards way to paint 'cause when a lot of it is covered or stencilled off, you can't actually see the full image."

Lynch's primary focus has been revealing the history of a place through landscape, meaning he is always conscious of the actual events that took place there.

"It's really important especially coming up on Canada 150," says Lynch. "I mean what are we really celebrating? We need to pay respect to those who were here before us." Lynch makes this clear with an actual piece in the exhibit that says he would like to acknowledge that his landscape paintings are depicting the traditional territories of the Tlingit, Tagish, Southern and Northern Tutchone, Han and Gwich'in First Nations. During his research process, Lynch learned about Beringia—a prehistoric non-glaciated land mass that encompassed the northern part of the world during the ice age.

"There was this crazy period with mammoths and giant 10-foot beavers that would eat humans," Lynch says. "Even going to the Yukon now, you can picture a woolly mammoth just strolling around."

Until Sun., May 20 • Land of the Midnight Sun • Peter Robertson Gallery, Free

Stephan Boissonneault