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## FEATURES

### I ♥ Paint II at Angell Gallery

The sequel to Kim Dorland's *I ♥ Paint II* show at the Angell Gallery finds the artist/curator selecting contemporary paintings from artists around the globe. The exhibition aims to celebrate a medium that, for some, has receded in cultural relevancy with the onslaught of new media practices and installation art that have become more commonly exercised since the late twentieth century. As Kim Dorland said: "For this second instalment of the *I ♥ Paint* show, my thoughts haven't really changed. Painting matters. It's current. It's relevant. And it's exciting – in many different forms. The evidence for this are the works by the talented and diverse group represented in this show." Generously spaced throughout the gallery, each work is given a singular presence, allowing visitors to ponder the individual stylistic motifs and subject matter present within each painting.



Installation view, West Gallery. Courtesy of Angell Gallery

Aesthetically, the artworks showcase a grab bag of modern painting styles, both in colour and form. Elizabeth Huey's paintings recall a vivid tonal explorations through the use of prismatic blues, pinks, and yellows. Her landscapes, like "Picnic at the Falls", are idealistic and dangerous looking at the same time. The couple seem to enjoy their time on the rocks surrounded by fast running waterfalls that might wash them away at any moment. Bill Saylor's "Storm King" brings to mind Willem de Kooning's visceral and gestural portraiture and the strong colors of the Fauves. "Storm King" depicts a large predatory cat – a lion

perhaps – a savage hunter. It has blood running from its mouth and has additional eyes that are also painted in red. We don't have the feeling that the "eye of the storm" is "safe". There is something anthropomorphic in this figure. Saylor has created a mixed being – the human is hidden in the beast.



Elizabeth Huey, Picnic at the Falls, 2015, acrylic and oil on panel, 18" x 24". Courtesy of Angell Gallery



Bill Saylor, Storm King, 2015, oil and paper on canvas, 27" x 40". Courtesy of Angell Gallery

Adam Lee, who lives and works near Melbourne, Australia, uses a wide range of sources including historical and colonial photography, biblical narratives, natural history, contemporary music, film and literature to investigate aspects of the human condition. There is always something spiritual in his paintings, that as he says, comes from his effort to apply the biblical truth to our modern life. "Hermit" is a very ambiguous image. The figure might be a modern recluse with his sad face and ornamental hat that remind us of old clowns or he might be a dressed up performer. The semi-abstract composition is dramatic and playful at the same time.



Adam Lee, Hermit, oil on canvas, 18" x 22". Courtesy of Angell Gallery

Based on found photographs or magazine cut outs, Anna Bjerger's paintings re-figure familiar imagery in a transformed context. She is drawn to images that blend the anonymous and the familiar, allowing the viewer to imagine countless possible narratives. The broader brushwork of Bjerger's enigmatic "Flannel" and "Sailor Bag" reveal the inherent experimental qualities of paint, where recognizable forms and shapes can be loosely rendered yet remain partially perceptible. She creates an atmosphere that can be found in other Nordic artists' work, like that of Karin Mamma Andersson, that seem to be neutral but heavy with hidden tension and foreboding.



Anna Bjerger, Sailor Bag, oil on aluminum, 16" x 12". Courtesy of Angell Gallery

The contrasting contours and dense impasto of Erin Loree's "Wing It" defies the two-dimensionality of the medium, while also giving the image a tactile and vigorous quality akin to Abstract Expressionism. Light radiates from her paintings

that reminds us of portraits or landscapes. Kent Merriman Jr.'s "Untitled" strays from the other artworks by incorporating lacerated Xeroxed prints and an undulating surface to present the least conventional and most immediately striking piece in the exhibition.



Erin Loree, Wing It , 2015, oil on canvas, 50" x 40". Courtesy of Angell Gallery



Kent Merriman Jr., Untitled, Xerox print transfer, oil, acrylic, staples on canvas over panel, 34" x 34". Courtesy of Angell Gallery

The lack of stylistic and thematic cohesion between the artworks supports the idea of heterogeneity within present-day painting practices, while also showcasing Dorland's varied reverence towards the craft. There is no substantial contextual relationship between the paintings in this exhibition, as viewers are called to appreciate these interesting, yet disparate artworks based on their own singular merits. In an age of temporal performance art and ephemeral installation

practices, the durable materiality of *I ♥ Paint II* provides an alternative art-viewing experience that feels more permanent. Furthermore, the exhibition reveals the continued persistence and necessity for more traditional means of artistic expression.

By David Saric

\*Exhibition information: June 5 – July 11, 2015, Angell Gallery, 12 Ossington Avenue, Toronto. Gallery hours: Wed - Sat, 12 - 5 p.m.