

Vancouver gallery's new home energizes emerging show

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EMERGENCE

Elliott Louis Gallery, 258 East First Ave.

Aug. 21 to Sept. 6

There are 16 artists in the Elliott Louis Gallery's fourth annual emerging artists' exhibition, which is considerably bigger than the other three, and there isn't one who doesn't deserve a serious second look. The artists, mostly in their 20s and 30s, come from Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Halifax and New York.



CREDIT:

Jaelyn Conley's *Untitled (Rosegarden)*.

The gallery moved from its Granville Island location in the Waterfall building in March, and is now in a larger 3,600-square-foot space right next door to the Catriona Jeffries Gallery on East First Avenue. The owner, Ted Lederer, has transformed from the ground up what used to be a dirty warehouse in an industrial district into a bright, friendly, state-of-the-art space that has the look of a clean, contemporary Soho gallery.

True, walk-by traffic is small but, "It was a calculated decision to be here," Lederer says. The Olympic Village, which will house the athletes, is close by and, after 2010, the village will be turned into condos. There are other real-estate developments planned for the area, so perhaps the old prediction that the east end would one day develop into something else was more than just a pipe dream.

The quality of this show owes its reason for being to the curator, Lynn Ruschinsky, a very hip and very smart woman who stresses that craftsmanship is, to her, above all in importance, as is, for lack of a better word, basic niceness. Nobody wants to deal with an attitude-ridden dummy.

Nor should anyone judge a work of art by what they pull up on a website, as I found out, though I should have known better. Works that I'd dismissed out of hand from looking at them on the computer were far more interesting seen live than they were when flattened out and small on the screen.

Take Jay Gazely's knife-edged acrylic grids, for instance. They suddenly looked more like science fiction, circa the 1960s, with the complexity and depth of DNA patterns. I even looked twice at, and reconsidered, stuff that I'd thought at first morbid and adolescent: Jennifer Chernecki's *The Tragic Dilemma* and *Key to the Nuthouse*. I still don't like them, especially the former with its mother robin

looking askance at the snake just breaking free from its eggshell in a nest of hatchlings, but now I could see from the baroque hyper-realism of its draftsmanship that there was probably more to the idea than Norman Rockwell on acid.

The work is generally inexpensive, considering. "None of the artists have had an exhibition," said Lederer. "We want to encourage them with a sale. And it's the dog days of summer."

Jeremiah Birnbaum is an interesting case, a professional athlete who just graduated from the Vancouver Police Academy and has always loved drawing. His three beautifully executed charcoals on paper called Build/Destroy show a naked chest and a pair of hands being wrapped in boxer's tape, the nipples seeming like unseeing eyes.

The pieces by young Ian Sandilands are touchingly honest for being graffiti-based. "Some of this work moves beyond the gallery scene," Ruscheinsky said.

Deborah Holowka's paintings are stunning, as are Brendan Flanagan's. "Jackson Pollock crossed with German romanticism," Ruscheinsky said. They did indeed evoke Caspar Friedrich and you'd never tire of looking at them.

Megan Carroll's intensely delicate nesting jagged eggshell porcelains had lost one-third of their mass in three firings. Josan Pinon's three c-prints mounted on aluminum move beyond photography in capturing the look of annoyed defiance and puzzlement shown by three Toronto subway patrons at having Pinon's camera shoved into their faces (the hugely awarded photography prize-winner is shy, Filipino and four-foot-eight). Claire Henry's winsomely lyrical ceramics of sea creatures that never existed are delightful to look at and hold. Megan McCabe's selective memories of family holidays float in an ocean of blank space.

I kept going back to one piece, Jaclyn Conley's Untitled (Rosegarden). This is masterly. A woman, her eyes closed, leans back, apparently covered by flowers. A chain-link fence gleams in the background. Is she asleep or dead?

It was the only piece with a red dot on it. It had sold before the show had opened.

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