Summer July, 2014

Trans-Canada Art Tour

Matthew Ryan Smith, Ph.D.
Trans-Canada Art Tour
A summer’s worth of eclectic must-see exhibits.

Richard Watts: Three Seasons
Two Rivers Gallery, Prince George, BC
April 11 to July 13
tworiversgallery.ca

Toronto-based sculptural artist Richard Watts has been working with skin and bone for several years. Here he uses gauze and vulcanized rubber tree sap from Burma to fashion translucent and sometimes haunting “skins,” modelled after natural and industrial objects such as rocks and canoes. Watts interprets the devastating effects of climate change through the fragility and temporality of these earthy tapestries.

Clockwise from top: Shield Kimono Spirit Catching Thunderbird | 2012; Canoe People | 2008; Summer Boat Skin | 2009.
All works are rubber, gauze, forest flora, found objects, paint, rust and miscellaneous particles from source. Photos courtesy of Richard Watts.
Ian Johnston: Reinventing Consumption
Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario
April 30 to August 3
rmg.on.ca

SINCE THE Industrial Revolution, Western societies have grown accustomed to accumulating objects and items whose use-value is often trivial. Ian Johnston uses sculpture and installation to examine how manufacturing and waste affect different cultures and geographies. Viewers will be confronted by larger issues of globalization, pollution and mass-production while contemplating their own often-dangerous practices of consumption.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
The Chamber | 2013 | rip-stop nylon, computer-controlled fans, lights and audio, objects from the banks of the waste stream;
Between the Lines (Light) (detail) | 2010 | silkscreened stoneware;
CCVIII | 2010 | stoneware;
Vitrine 4 | 2010 | ephemera from the creation of Between the Lines (Light) and Between the Lines (Dark) at European Ceramic Work Centre.
Photos courtesy of Ian Johnston.
High Adventure: Byron Harmon in the Columbia Icefield, 1924
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton
March 29 to August 17
youraga.ca

IN 1924, Alberta-based photographer Byron Harmon headed for the Rocky Mountains with one 35mm film camera and four still cameras. High Adventure traces Harmon’s journey from its beginnings in Lake Louise to its culmination in Maligne Lake by using the artist’s fascinating visual material. The exhibition also marks the 90th anniversary of both the Art Gallery of Alberta and Harmon’s expedition.

Columbia Icefield trip, side glacier to Saskatchewan Glacier | 1924 | Byron Harmon, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

7. Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.
Winnipeg Art Gallery,
May 10 to August 31
wag.ca

JACKSON BEARDY, Eddy Cobiness, Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez have ruptured cultural stereotypes of Indigenous art by demanding recognition as professional artists. Not only was this so-called ‘Indian Group of Seven’ instrumental to establishing Indigenous art as an important facet within contemporary art, but they did it by culling Indigenous visual iconography, often based on the natural environment, as a rich source of subject matter. Ultimately, this exhibition represents the lasting importance of their historical and artistic legacy.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Medicine Bear | 1977 | Carl Ray | acrylic on canvas;

Watering the Horse | 1974 | Eddy Cobiness | pen and ink;


Photos by Don Hall.
The Source: Rethinking Water through Contemporary Art
Rodman Hall Art Centre, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario
May 23 to September 28
brocku.ca/rodman-hall

THOUGH CLEAN WATER is a basic element of life, it’s fast becoming a serious concern in Canada, and as such its political significance has increased. The 10 artists involved in this exhibition examine different social histories and the cultural, economic and political significance of water through the language of visual art. The result is a poignant and compelling encounter with something we often take for granted, but which remains immensely complex.

Submersible (Hogarth) #1 | 2013 | Patrick Mahon | Ink on wood. Photo courtesy of Rodman Hall Art Centre.

Snow
Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Québec
Until September 28, 2014
civilization.ca

THIS FUNDAMENTAL characteristic of Canadian artistry, identity and cultural history is on display through artworks, artefacts and objects. The 300 items in this exhibition – from horse snowshoes to hooked rugs to foot warmers – range from the practical to the bizarre. That being said, Snow is geared toward all ages and offers a fascinating relief from the heat of the summer sun in more ways than one.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Maple Sugar Harvest | Alice Rioux | hooked rug;
Horse snowshoes | circa 1900;
Doing Our Own Thing: Back-to-the-Land in Eastern Canada during the 1970s
Cape Breton University Art Gallery, Sydney, Nova Scotia
June 13 to August 15
cbu.ca/art-gallery

CURATORS AMISH MORRELL and Pan Wendt have organized a regional visual history of the back-to-the-land movement at the height of its influence, signified by a return to rural areas from urban centres and an emphasis on small-scale food production for friends and family. Comprised of sculpture, texts and photography, this exhibition reconsiders the movement’s philosophical application to the present and the utopian potential that made it attractive to so many Canadians.

LEFT Peter Watt and Heather Herington, Forest Glen, Cape Breton | early 1970’s | George Thomas | Kodachrome slide.
ABOVE Portrait of Lynn Zimmerman, Margaree Harbour, Cape Breton | early 1970’s | George Thomas | Kodachrome slide.
Photos courtesy of Amish Morell.

The Natural & The Manufactured
ODD Gallery, Klondike Institute of Art & Culture, Dawson City, Yukon
August 14 to September 19
naturalmanufactured.com

CONTRIBUTING TO A SERIES of thematic exhibitions co-organized by ODD and the Klondike Institute’s artist-in-residence program, Dylan Miner and Terence Houle forge new site-specific artworks, both inside and outside the gallery, which respond to the Yukon’s natural environment, culture and economy. An additional exhibition and residency by Guelph-based printmaker and illustrator Alison Judd will feature Moosehide Slide, an installation that engages Dawson’s City’s ancient landside.

LEFT TIKIBING BOOSKIKAMIGAAG | 2013 | Dylan Miner | RISO print
Miner’s 24-page booklet chronicles the Indigenous history of Spring Grove (now Flint, MI) and catalogues the area’s edible and medicinal plants. Tikibing Booskikamigaag means “Spring Lake” in Ojibwe.

Matthew Ryan Smith is an independent curator and educator based in Toronto. His PhD from Western University in London, Ontario, focused on art and visual culture, and his writing has appeared in Canadian Art, C Magazine and Fuse, as well as academic journals and exhibition catalogues.