

Artist Statement:

My paintings explore themes of car-culture, consumerism, and sprawl. Through this subject matter, I aim to engage the viewer into dense manifestations of contemporary life, with reverence to the history of Canadian landscape painting and modernist space abstraction. They appear as colourful and busy images, but also present a dark realism. Formally, my interest in painting is space; controlling the density of an image, and manipulating perspective. I also really like fluorescent colours.

My current work revisits the idea of Canadian landscape in terms not of natural but of commercial space, where ubiquitous retail outlets dictate use of the land and proclaim its occupation. The paintings subvert the idea of a romanticized untouched Canadian environment, iconized in such paintings as the Group of Seven. Themes of urban sprawl are rendered in thick layers of oil paint, directional brushstrokes and heavy impasto. Densely crowded compositions map out a geography of anonymity, a sort of nowhere typical of the outskirts of large North American cities.

The paintings become their own fabricated environments; where placement of advertising, roads and infrastructure break up otherwise picturesque scenery. They are teeming with cars, gas stations, traffic lights and illuminated signs schematically appropriating logos of big chains such as McDonald's, Canadian Tire, Wal-Mart, Costco, Wendy's and Tim Hortons. The spaces are deceiving, and perspective is skewed. Sparse foliage and encroached wildlife are integrated in small details. Seasonal effects of rain and snow also provide atmospheric frameworks. Through this work, I aim to communicate a sense of excess, widespread consumption and environmental impact. I like to think about the way I assemble my paintings as an urban planner mapping and carving out space from the natural environment into new developments.

After working through concentrated bodies of work, I feel that I've found my voice and am now making my strongest paintings. My techniques of layering space together are becoming more refined. I think the most significant step forward for this work is how the subject matter is open ended to different interpretations of meaning; humor, Canadian identity, society's dependence on cars, the rural-urban fringe, plastic architecture, and environmental impact.



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Jack Bishop 2016