

Calgary's top 12 art exhibitions of 2008

By Nancy Tousley, Calgary Herald
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Through the Looking Glass -- Glenbow Museum

The museum's new president and CEO, Jeff Spalding, showed us how it's done in his first curatorial outing with a big, smart, beautifully selected show of contemporary art that went behind the mirror to overturn the viewer's expectations, play with perception and look into the land of dreams. Glenbow's best contemporary show in years.

Souvenir de Voyage -- Dianne Bos

Part of Exposure 2008, the Calgary-Banff festival of photography, Dianne Bos's solo show at Newzones Gallery of 101-centimetre square pinhole camera photographs, the largest she has printed, slowed time and eloquently demonstrated its passage as a continuum with images taken in Italy and France.

Skirmish at Bloody Point and The Clearances -- Shary Boyle

The Toronto artist tackled a huge subject--colonialism and its ills--in her installations, Skirmish at Bloody Point and The Clearances, at the Illingworth Kerr Gallery of the Alberta College of Art & Design, blending myth and fact in a lyrical work to get at subjugation's impact. Her Kerr performance of Dark Hand and Lamplight was enchanting.

Eric Cameron: Works from 1963 - 2008

A mini-retrospective, this elegant show at TrépanierBaer Gallery combined the Governor General Award-winning artist's early, colourful Sellotape Paintings and his white Thick Paintings, an ongoing series, to reveal the central place of process in his work throughout a distinguished career.

In Which They Find Themselves Between Here and There - Dave & Jenn

The artist duo's solo debut at Skew Gallery introduced us to the imaginative world of Dave & Jenn, the personas of 20-somethings Jennifer Saleik and David Foy, in landscape paintings that are highly coloured, many-layered and elaborate allegories of their life and times. Yes, they both work on the paintings at the same time.

Scenes from the House Dream -- David Hoffos

The culmination of five phases of work shown over five years at TrépanierBaer Gallery, David Hoffos's completed Scenes from the House made its debut at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge. A magical work with a dark side, Scenes begins a national tour at the National Gallery of Canada in November.

Houle's video installation at the Glenbow Museum, made in response to Winold Reiss's portrait of his grandmother in the museum's collection, shows his grandmother, mother, sister and daughter assuming the pose in a remarkable demonstration of the workings of representation, the construction of icons and the power of the gaze.

Hot & Cold: Two Decades of Work in Metal -- Micah Lexier

A sculptural sampler of mostly small works at TrepanierBaer Gallery, the ensemble set Lexier's \$1-million Torode sculpture commission (expected in 2010) in the context of his work, which is wonderfully inventive and poetic as well as precise in its deployment of ideas and materials.

Device to Root Out Evil -- Dennis Oppenheim

Calgary's first major piece of international public art, an upside-down steel and glass church with its steeple thrust into the ground, went on outdoor display in a vest-pocket park at Ramsay Exchange, courtesy of the Torode Group of Companies and the Glenbow Museum, which has this important U. S. artist's work on loan for five years.

Recent Photographs -- Matthew Pillsbury

With this show of photographs of people at their computers, TVs and cellphones from the New York photographer's series Screen Lives, and the show of Japanese photographer Kohei Yoshiyuki's voyeuristic The Park, dealer Douglas Udell presented the year's best exhibitions of international photography at Udell Contemporary.

During Stampede Week, Stride Gallery presented Donna White's provocative look at the white cowboy hat and the cowgirl image on a big trivision billboard on 9th Avenue S. W. at 8th Street S. W., where it was seen by thousands of drivers and passersby. A smart, off-site project with great topical edge.

Recent Works: Paintings, Drawings, Prints --Tim Zuck

The dark drawings in this quiet, somewhat sombre show at the Paul Kuhn Gallery set the tone for an investigation of how geometric figures --triangle, diamond, parallelogram, house, arrows--could be packed with tension and made to convey feeling and states of being at particular moments in time.