

ARTS

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B4

Diversity of show illuminates

Exhibition displays research materials that act as inspiration for five local artists

BY ROBERT REID
RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER

Those who doubt the vitality and diversity of the visual arts in Waterloo Region are in for a pleasantly rude awakening when they drop by the latest instalment of the Studio Alert series at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

Curated by Allan MacKay, the gallery's curatorial and collections consultant, the fourth annual exhibition showcases the range and quality of artistic practice across the region by focusing on five artists.

"We're trying to pay attention to our own neighbourhood," MacKay noted during an informal chat.

Aptly titled *Illuminating the Source*, the exhibition features three Kitchener artists, Melissa Doherty, Soheila Esfahani and Paul Roorda; one Waterloo artist, Noriko Maeda; and one Elora artist, Paul Dignan, an assistant professor in the University of Waterloo's fine arts department.

The exhibition examines the relationship between inspiration and works of art.

When MacKay made his rounds of area studios he became interested in the source materials on which the artists base their artmaking.

Consequently, the exhibition incorporates displays of research and resource materials that act as material inspiration for the artists. As well, it includes a video of conversations with the artists.

Illuminating the Source features representational and non-representational works, but it's the spaces in between that allow room for reflection, contemplation and critique.

This dialogue between artist and viewer is heightened because of the exhibition's compactness which encourages concentrated attentiveness.

PAUL DIGNAN

Combining manual drawing, digital imaging and acetate projection, Paul Dignan transforms common, recognizable imagery (for example, scripts, monograms and wallpaper patterns) into uncommon, unrecognizable shapes.

His trio of untitled acrylic canvases are Popish in mood and feel, sporting an array of squiggles, swirls and fins in bright and bold greens, greys, pinks, reds, turquoises and black.

ART EXHIBIT

Who: **Studio Alert:
Illuminating the Source**
Where: **Kitchener-Waterloo
Art Gallery**
When: **Through Jan. 7**
Phone: **519-579-5860**

Viewers are invited to make their own intuitive associations with the work. Happily, there are no pat visual equations.

MELISSA DOHERTY

Melissa Doherty's series of *Treehugger* oil paintings depicts clusters of deciduous trees as soft, fuzzy, cottonball objects that bring to mind the cuddly, stuffed toys young children love to hug.

As warm and fuzzy as the images are, Doherty is keenly aware of how humanity has reduced nature to a fetish object after imposing our will on the environment, taming in our own image what had hitherto been wild.

Doherty's earthy pastels remind us of how much nature has retreated. Cultivation has reduced landscape to artifice and artifact.

SOHEILA ESFAHANI

Eastern poetry and mysticism blends with Western abstraction in the elegant paintings of Soheila Esfahani.

The coalescence of culture and esthetic produces a union greater than its disparate parts.

Some of the words of the Persian poet Rumi are identifiable, other times they are graceful lines, like sculptured desert sands or ripples on water.

The script is raised from the canvas, resembling lines of thick honey or gooey chocolate. It's all a viewer can do to resist the temptation to touch these highly tactile paintings.

You don't have to be familiar with the poetry of Rumi to understand these lyrical works, but it's imperative to appreciate the poetry of line, shape and colour.

NORIKO MAEDA

Line is metaphor for Noriko Maeda. She transforms what appears to be traditional calligraphy into the search for meaning and relationship with the world.

Her larger ink on wash pictures are minimalist, spontaneous, delicate and



Acrylic painting by Paul Dignan, untitled.

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graceful, a kind of visual ballet. Her colour is subtle; less is more nuanced and suggestive than more. A sense of play — remember the joy of painting as a youngster? — animates her work, which references the dynamic nature of nature.

Such titles as *Blue Moon*, *Into the Forest* and *Play Like a Child* reflect Maeda's joyous esthetic.

PAUL ROORDA

Paul Roorda's work is so subtle, so elegant — dare I say beautiful — it's easy to overlook, at least initially, its powerful critique of institutional religion.

Roorda's art eloquently advocates spirituality over piety, faith over belief, ritual over dogma.

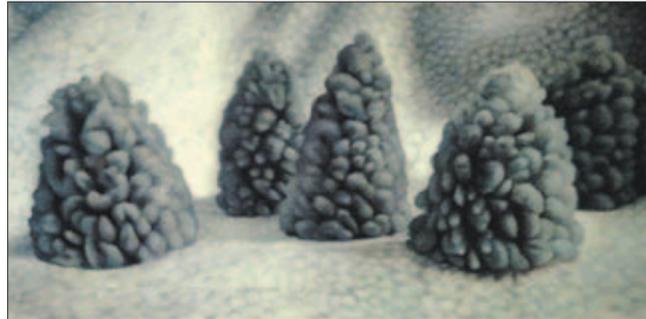
Like Esfahani, Roorda's working methods are serial, meditative and transformative.

He composes life-sized images out of material fragments which are embedded in small squares of delicate tissue paper. The squares are then meticulously sewn together with thread, producing a grid pattern.

Lot's Wife is a life-sized image of a woman drawn through shadowy pointillist dots rather than solid lines.

Similarly, *Samson* is a life-size image of a man drawn with thousands of pieces of hair. His hands are bound with thread.

Christ (Self-Portrait Levitating Over a Bed of Nails) shows a man lying on his back above a bed of nails. It's an evocative pun on the Resurrection which depicts Christ as a Houdini-like magician showman.

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Painting by Melissa Doherty, oil on canvas, titled treehugger#2.

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Installation by Paul Roorda, titled Once Daily, uses altered Bible and bottles.

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Grodzinski named Elora Festival GM

ELORA

With a solid background in classical music and a tested reputation as a mover and shaker in the local music scene, Joanne Grodzinski has been named the new general manager of the Elora Festival and Singers.

She replaces JoAnn Martin, who retired after six years at the helm.

Grodzinski, who lives in Elora, owned Guelph's Carden Street Music, a store that catered to classical and jazz music lovers. Shortly after retiring, she took on the job as executive director of the Guelph Youth Music Centre as the centre was getting started.

Grodzinski remembers the early days of the youth music centre, when several desks were pushed together in a solitary room and a burgeoning pile of debt threatened to overcome the vision of its organizers.

On her watch, the centre cleared its \$500,000 debt and grew to see more than 1,000 children and youth make use of it each day.

With a background as an educator and a BA in psychology, Grodzinski used to write books on elementary



Joanne Grodzinski, the former head of the Guelph Youth Music Centre, has been named the new general manager of the Elora Festival and Singers.

school mathematics and Canadian citizenship. She also co-created and produced the award-winning *Maestro Orpheus* and the *World Clock*, a children's story set to classical music.

Grodzinski said she hopes to parlay her experience into a successful season with the Elora Festival and Singers.

"When I decided to come here, I felt privileged to take an active role in the community I had been part of for 16 years. Working with classical music — one of my first loves — and with a world-acclaimed festival and choir is a dream come true," she said in a release.

Guelph Mercury

Autobiographic novel by Quebec-born writer wins Staebler award

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WATERLOO REGION

Francis Chalifour's autobiographical novel, *After*, has been chosen as the 2005 winner of the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-fiction.

After tells the story of a 15-year-old boy in the year following his father's suicide.

Staebler judged the submissions and the winner was selected before her death on Sept. 12.

The award was created 15 years ago and is administered by Wilfrid Laurier University.

It aims to support a beginning Canadian writer in publishing a work with Canadian significance.

Quebec-born Chalifour is a social science teacher who lives in Toronto. He has published several novels and articles in English and French.

Chalifour will receive the award at a ceremony in the Paul Martin Centre at Laurier on Nov. 8.

PASSING

Lister Sinclair, playwright, legendary broadcaster

Longtime CBC broadcaster and playwright Lister Sinclair, best known as host of the radio program *Ideas*, was remembered as a "true Renaissance man" following his death Monday at 85.

Sinclair, who joined the public broadcaster in 1944, was host of *Ideas* for 16 years, from 1983 until his retirement seven years ago. In recent years, he hosted the show on a guest basis.

He also wrote hundreds of radio and television plays during his career and was once referred to by critic Nathan Cohen as "easily the foremost in Canada's array of post-war playwrights."

"A true Renaissance man — writer, actor, critic, producer, poet, mathematician, scientist, naturalist, music commentator, linguist, lecturer and prize-winning programmer — Lister enriched our lives with the breadth and depth of his knowledge," Jane Chalmers, vice-president of CBC Radio, said in a note to staff.

He described Sinclair as "one of CBC's finest broadcasters and ambassadors, and one of our true pioneers."

Sinclair also spent time as host of CBC-TV's *The Nature of Things* and appeared on numerous shows including *Front Page Challenge*, *Telescope*,



Lister Sinclair hosted the CBC radio program *Ideas* for 16 years. The broadcaster and playwright died Monday at age 85.

Horizon, *Festival*, *Court of Opinion*, *Wayne and Shuster* and *Morningside*.

In 1972, he became vice-president of the CBC and helped organize what is now known as the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists.

Born in India, Sinclair was raised in England. He earned a BA in math and physics from the University of British Columbia and an MA from the University of Toronto. In 1985, he was made an officer of the Order of Canada.

Ideas will broadcast a three-hour tribute to Sinclair, starting Monday at 9 p.m. on CBC Radio One. It will continue Tuesday and Wednesday.

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