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Aleksander Hardashnakov

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6 New Toronto Art Spaces to Watch, by Jessica Kirsh, Candianart.ca, June 20, 2016

6 New Toronto Art Spaces to Watch

JUNE 20, 2016

BY JESSICA KIRSH



Works by (left and middle) Jesse Harris and (right) Jimmy Limit, from "Shangri-Lost," April 8 to May 8, 2016. Courtesy Roberta Pelan.

Canada's history of experimental spaces and artist-run centres is long, rich and complex. Some were founded to create homes for media art; others, for printmaking; and others still, for unconventional practices and marginalized communities.

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In the last few years, a new generation of project spaces dedicated to supporting emerging artists has cropped up in Toronto—in basements, commercial buildings and, in one case, an old air-conditioner repair shop.



"The Humane Society" at the Loon. Courtesy the Loon.

The Loon

Opened in 2015 by artists Liam Crockard and Aleksander Hardashnikov, the Loon is tucked away in Hardashnikov's studio on Sterling Road, holding down the fort in the multi-purpose building, which historically housed many artist studios, until, in Hardashnikov's words, its "inevitable collapse"—rent has been hiked by 80 per cent in some cases, [causing many artists to move out](#). Hardashnikov co-founded [Tomorrow Gallery](#), now based in New York, which previously occupied space in a nearby building.

The Loon has a homey feel: floors are painted salmon-pink instead of stark white, and visitors are offered cups of broth instead of glasses of wine. Their inaugural exhibition set the tone for a non-hierarchical curatorial format: postcard-sized artworks by more than 30 artists of all ages, media and origins. The Loon functions not as an entrepreneurial exercise but as an extension of the duo's artistic practice.

10 Exceptional Millennial Artists to Watch, by Christie Chu, The Huffington Post, 20 May, 2016

H 10 Exceptional Millennial Artists to Watch

10 EXCEPTIONAL MILLENNIAL ARTISTS TO WATCH



© 05/20/2015 12:02 pm ET | Updated May 21, 2015

This post originally appeared on artnet News

by Christie Chu



Aleksander Hardashnakov, *Voyeur/Creep/Thief*(2014). Photo: courtesy of Galerie Rodolphe Janssen.

3. Aleksander Hardashnakov (b. 1982)

In 2011, along with fellow artist Hugh Scott-Douglas and dealer Tara Downs, Aleksander Hardashnakov founded Tomorrow Gallery in Toronto; in 2014, Downs took full ownership and relocated the space to New York's Lower East Side. For his latest Tomorrow Gallery show, the artist created a site-specific installation incorporating small paintings that cover the space's outlet sockets, lights, and steel structures. Hardashnakov is currently in a two-person show with artist Darja Bajagić in Croy Nielson's project space (see [Why Darja Bajagić Appropriates Porn and Serial Killer Art](#)). The Canadian-born self-taught artist's work evokes a sense of nostalgia, romance, and mystery.

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Aleksander Hardashnakov-Variou Works, in Bizzare Beyond Belief, 21th of july, 2014

Aleksander Hardashnakov is an artist and the founder, along with Hugh Scott-Douglas and Tara Downs, of Tomorrow Gallery. Hardashnakov had his first solo with Clint Roenisch Gallery in 2011 and all of his paintings in the exhibition were acquired by the National Bank of Canada. In 2012, Hardashnakov was a finalist in the prestigious RBC Painting Competition.



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Aleksander Hardashnakov, The RBC Canadian Painting Competition interview series, by Chris Berube, The Walrus, 13 November 2012

Aleksander Hardashnakov

The RBC Canadian Painting Competition interview series

BY CHRIS BERUBE ([HTTPS://THEWALRUS.CA/AUTHOR/CHRIS-BERUBE/](https://thewalrus.ca/author/chris-berube/))

November 13, 2012 • 378 words



Art courtesy of Aleksander Hardashnakov
untitled 23 string piece 2, canvas string and enamel on canvas (122 x 91 centimetres).

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Aleksander Hardashnakov lives in Toronto. He is the co-founder of Tomorrow Gallery (<https://tomorrowgallery.info/>). His work has been displayed at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art and Clint Roenisch.

What are your influences?

Everything influences me. I am very impressionable.

How does theory inform your work?

I think theory in some way, shape or form, influences everyone and everything. I don't ignore it and I don't pay much attention either. I'm sure it seeps in or can be imposed by viewers. Most of the time when I am making a painting or drawing, I think about average things like what I should eat for dinner later, or what colours would go nicely together. I also think most of the things I make don't immediately crystallize. Inevitably, over time a web of ideas or theories will emerge.

What themes or narratives have you conveyed through your work, perhaps without actually thinking about them?

I think it's probably better for my work to continue to think about things I am not actually thinking about without telling you what I think I thought I was thinking about.

What do you think this year's RBC Canadian Painting Competition short list says about where painting is in Canada right now?

I don't know what it says.

What are your challenges, as an artist?

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Interviews are pretty challenging. Regular social situations are also very difficult. I think part of the reason I've gravitated to making art is so I don't have to say too much. I find a lot of normal things challenging, like regular exercise and brushing my teeth properly.



Art by Aleksander Hardashnakov; animation by *TheWalrus.ca*.

What are your ideal working conditions?

More space could always be put to use, and some windows would be nice too. I would like to become better at making work outside the studio setting. I'd like to get better at not thinking about ideal working conditions as well.

Is there something that one can point to that is distinctive about Canadian art – an outlook or a feeling (or a lack of one)?

At this point, I don't really think so.

This interview has been condensed and edited for publication. See all fifteen finalists at [TheWalrus.ca/cpc \(/cpc\)](http://TheWalrus.ca/cpc (/cpc)).

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Murray Whyte Visual arts, www.thestar.com, Toronto Star Newspaper, 3 July 2012

“trans/FORM” at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art: Review

How long have I been harping about the dearth of substantial museum shows representing the dynamic hodgepodge of local artistic production? Long enough, it would appear, at least to judge by “trans/FORM,” the brand-new exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Share on Facebook



At MOCCA's new show “trans/FORM,” Jaime Angelopoulos's bright pink sculpture “Unconditional Love” sits next to Derrick Pien's “Still Silent,” a skewered wooden hulk. The show is focused on the use of common materials in art made by a group of eight young Toronto artists. VIEW 2 PHOTO-Szoom
MURRAY WHYTE

At MOCCA's new show “trans/FORM,” Jaime Angelopoulos's bright pink sculpture “Unconditional Love” sits next to Derrick Pien's “Still Silent,” a skewered wooden hulk. The show is focused on the use of common materials in art made by a group of eight young Toronto artists.

How long have I been harping about the dearth of substantial museum shows representing the dynamic hodgepodge of local artistic production? Long enough, it would appear, at least to judge by “trans/FORM,” the brand-new exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. Director and curator David Liss groups together eight Toronto artists — the oldest among them 34, for heaven's sake — for a tightly-focused, thoroughly engaging show that's among the best in MOCCA's seven-year history on Queen Street. There's no accounting for taste, and Liss's conceit of identifying a loose movement among young artists here to embrace workaday materials and cast-offs as the raw material of art-making is bang-on with my own.

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Echoes of the 20th century's great "isms" abound: Georgia Dickie's playful ingenuity with material and proportion — an iron rod lies propped by a tangle of chain link, a perforated brass cylinder dangling from the end; a rusted iron hoop balances precariously on a ridged plinth of wood that surely served some useful light-industrial purpose at some point — gathers up the best impulses of Minimalism and Dadaism. Prosaic materials? Check. Readymade objects? Check. But here's the best part: Dickie's conceptual borrowings are overshadowed by an innate gift for composition that's entirely her own.

"trans/Form," to give the necessary explainer, is Liss's way of putting a set of semi-like practices under a unifying rubric — that's what curators do — and while group shows typically end up stretched thin to find a fit, this one's loose and relaxed in its easy associations. Maybe it's something in the water: With the exception of one, Sasha Pierce, who's a short shot down Lansdowne Avenue in Parkdale, every artist here works out of studios on the west end's patchwork Sterling Road near the Nestle chocolate factory.

Nestle is its last semi-industrial resident. Sterling is in a pregnant state of becoming: Rubblefields where old factories once stood bear now-familiar development applications for mixed-use "communities;" a 10-storey art-deco heap of a building that was once the headquarters of the Northern Aluminum Company awaits its makeover into loft-style condos, its historical designation protecting it from the wrecking ball.

All around, mid-century brick boxes house "trans/Form" artists like Dickie, Hugh Scott-Douglas, Niall McClelland, Jaime Angelopoulos, Aleksander Hardashnakov, Derrick Piens and Jennifer Rose Sciarrino. Here, "trans/Form" takes on its intentional double-entendre: using everyday stuff for art is one thing, but in the midst of an urban wasteland seized by a fast-forward gentrification process, the term takes on broader meaning. Work like Dickie's in particular becomes vaguely archaeological, as the decks are cleared to make way for the new. Whether she means to or not, Dickie's salvaged materials are as much monument to a city soon to be no more as they are personal material explorations.

"trans/Form" is a snapshot of both a city and its cultural production; it captures a moment in real time. This kind of pulse-taking is exactly the kind of thing this city needs more of in its art scene. These are fragile ecosystems, sustained by interaction, exchange and a market dynamic that seems to finally be finding its feet. Scott-Douglas in particular emerges from the pack here; still in his early 20s, he seems forever on a place from one place to another, his work in high demand in centres like New York and Los Angeles.

Inventively cheeky with his appropriative techniques, Scott-Douglas is self-consciously unprecious. His works here, amorphous wisps of blue screened onto thin aluminum panels are made by a commercial sign manufacturer, underscoring with a knowing wink both Liss's thesis of prosaic production, and the arbitrary value system art imposes. But he takes it one step too far: Bolting the works self-consciously to the wall and affixing a chain and padlock, Scott-Douglas does less to steer art-making into the workaday than to comment on his own growing stardom: Steal these paintings, it seems to say. I dare you.

Similarly hot properties can be found here in Niall McClelland and Aleksander Hardashnakov, Scott-Douglas's partner in the Tomorrow Gallery, an ad hoc space on Sterling. Like Dickie, Hardashnakov's paintings are rooted in pre-conceptual practices. His abstractions are Rothko-esque, but with a twist, using a combination of gesso and — in line with theme — unconventional colourizers like concrete dye.

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McClelland's signature pieces are his tapestries: Large sheafs of paper layered thick with black toner from multiple photocopying. McClelland used to fold them up tight and stick them in his pocket for days or weeks, letting the toner fade on the fold lines, revealing the flaws in the humble low-fi technology while embracing old conceptual ideas of process-based art-making, where a final piece was ultimately a reflection of everyday activity.

As McClelland's reputation grew, so did the tapestries, and the three huge ones here may not have spent any time in his pocket, but their austere beauty engulfs nonetheless. Installing them here alongside Angelopoulos's tactile, ridiculously engaging pink anemone-like sculpture *Stand Up For Yourself* and Pien's *Still Silent*, a roughly-made wooden husk skewered by a thick orange column, Liss's point is nicely made: Transformation can be achieved by gestures both aggressive and subtle, and in the right hands, the effect is undiminished.

Speaking of hands, on a facing wall, Pierce's dizzying canvases await. Even on close inspection, their geometric abstraction appears to be the product of dense thread-weaving. It's not. Using a fine spout like a cake decorator, Pierce exactingly dabs razor-thin lines of oil paint to make her works. These are intensely hand-made things, taking months at a time to construct even 8-inch by 12-inch works. How this fits the greater theme I'm not entirely sure – Pierce's work was more at home, maybe, at the recent "60 Painters" exhibition — but it's one of the most inventive takes on painting I've seen.

Rounding the final corner of "trans/FORM," a row of concrete supports in a progressive state of reclining are arrayed in front of four corrugated panels with varying sheens. I felt for a moment I'd stepped through a wormhole and into 1964 New York, into the John Daniels Gallery, where Dan Graham put on shows by seminal minimalists like Dan Flavin, Sol Lewitt and Donald Judd. So workaday were most installations, as per the Minimalist edict, their parts were returned to the hardware store after the show ended.

This deliberate echo is the work of Sciarrino, and the subtle quotation is the root of her work here, but only its beginning. The apparent supports are carefully-cast cement sculpture; the panels are off-the-shelf fibreglass roofing, but scraped and scored by the points of a variety of base metals — gold, platinum, copper — engraining their humble synthetic surface with the elemental. Sciarrino's subtle subversion of value — by any reasonable measure, art's pretty worthless, and that's exactly why we value it so much — is as old as the hills, or at least conceptualism. But as she and her "trans/FORM" cohort make so engagingly clear, its inexhaustible ideas are always ripe for renewal. "trans/FORM" continues at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art to August 12.

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