

# ROBERT LEMAY

*"Nothing is more abstract than reality."*

~ Giorgio Morandi

In my series, "Grid," I paint square by square, row by row. The painting may appear digitized but is meticulously hand painted. I've always used the grid to scale up my photos but leaving traces of the process creates a tension between the image and the squares of tone and colour which are reassembled by the eye.

My series, "Mythology," is a development of my book still lifes. As with my flower paintings, I reduce and simplify in order to focus on a single image. I'm looking at magazine covers as a contemporary subject, trying to unite the tradition of Holbein and Rembrandt with an exploration of the fashion and celebrity culture of today. The subjects in my paintings are not unlike the people John Singer Sargent would have been painting a hundred years ago.

I consider these portraits to be still lifes because they depict the magazine covers stripped of text, leaving only the title or barcode to indicate their source. I'm making a painting of a photograph rather than a conventional portrait. Gerhard Richter said he was trying to make a painting as exciting as a photograph and I'm extending this idea with the found subject of the fashion magazine.

These works wouldn't be possible without the internet which allows one to search the globe to find images that have disappeared from the newsstands years or decades ago. In this way, the paintings represent the classic theme of memento mori or vanitas, reminding one of the passage of time and the fleeting nature of reality.

I began thinking about a previous series I'd worked on where I painted more traditional book still lifes. In the same way that I wanted to pare down the traditional flower still life to a bold, single bloom, I also wanted to just look at a single book. After painting several book covers from our personal library, I came upon some old magazines on our shelves, and treated them in a similar way. With the magazines, I removed the text advertising the contents of the magazine and give priority to the model on the cover. I want to look beyond the advertising and captions such as "The Real Reason You're Not Losing Weight" and "Age Appropriate Denim" and see the person instead.

I'm interested in the layers of transformations – from the transformation of the model, to the photo-shopped image, which then becomes a ubiquitous image seen in grocery store aisles and on coffee tables. Unlike the mass produced glossy magazine cover, paint is a kind of skin, a unique surface.

The use of 'found' imagery echoes Warhol's use of tabloid photographs of Liz, Marilyn and Elvis and also the early paintings of Gerhard Richter who also employed the strategy of using newspaper images as his source material.

#### AWARDS

2007 Alberta Foundation for the Arts Projects Grant

1996 Alberta Foundation for the Arts Projects Grant

1990 Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant

1989 Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant

#### LECTURES, RESIDENCIES, and HONOURS

2015 Shaw Communications has named a room in Shaw Court, Calgary, Alberta, The Robert Lemay Room

2014 Inaugural Artist in Residence, Graceland University, Iowa, November 2014

2007 Alberta Society of Artists, September 13, 2007

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 "Grid," Wallace Galleries, Calgary

2015 Robert Lemay: 30 Years, Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton

2013 "Flower," Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton

2011 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton

2010 "In a Narrow Space," Shayne Gallery, Montreal

2009 Wallace Galleries, Calgary

2008 "Calm Things," Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton.

2007 Shayne Gallery, Montreal

2006 Wallace Galleries, Calgary

- 2005 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton
- 2004 Shayne Gallery, Montreal
- 2003 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton
- 2002 Shayne Gallery, Montreal  
Wallace Galleries, Calgary
- 2001 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton
- 2000 Wallace Galleries, Calgary
- 1998 Hollander York Gallery, Toronto  
Douglas Udell Gallery, Vancouver
- 1997 Wallace Galleries, Calgary
- 1996 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton
- 1995 Hollander York Gallery, Toronto  
Wallace Galleries, Calgary
- 1994 Douglas Udell Gallery, Vancouver  
Wallace Galleries, Calgary  
Hollander York Gallery, Toronto
- 1993 Douglas Udell Gallery, Edmonton
- 1992 Woltjen/Udell, Edmonton
- 1991 Wallace Galleries, Calgary
- 1989 Woltjen/Udell, Edmonton
- 1988 Woltjen/Udell, Vancouver
- 1987 Woltjen/Udell, Edmonton

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2011 "For the Love of Art," Wallace Galleries, Calgary, Alberta
- 1999 "New Talent Invitational" Denise Bibro Fine Arts, New York City  
 "Alberta: Six Degrees of Separation," Prairie Regional Art Gallery  
 Grand Prairie, AB
- 1998 "Multiple Realities," Muttart Public Art Gallery, Calgary
- 1997 "Still Life," McMullen Art Gallery, Edmonton

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2010 Canadian Interviews. "The Moment of Astonishment: Interview with Robert Lemay." canadianinterviews.com.
- 2010 Ryan, Janice. "Oil Paintings Animate Common Objects," Edmonton Journal, Friday, June 17, 2011.
- 2009 Notebook Magazine. V.3, Issue 8. "Shawna & Robert Lemay: Calm Things."
- 2008 Bouchard, Gilbert. "Lemay Reinterprets Iconic Art in his Neutral Realist Style," Edmonton Journal, Friday, April 11, 2008.
- 2006 Bouchard, Gilbert. "Alberta: What is Visible," Galleries West Magazine.
- 2005 Bouchard, Gilbert. "Lemay Breathes New Life into Form", Edmonton Journal. Oct 7, G8.
- 2005 Lemay, Shawna. "Precarious", Artichoke. Summer, 2005, pp. 38-45.
- 2003 Kellog, Alan. "Catching Up With the Beautiful People", Edmonton Journal.
- 2001 Bouchard, Gilbert. "Real Life Frozen in Still-Life Mastery", Edmonton Journal. May 4, E14
- 1999 Gustafson, Paula. "Robert Lemay at Douglas Udell Gallery," Asian Art News, March/April 1999
- 1998 Image reproduced. Alberta Views, Spring Vol. 1, No.2, pp. 15.
- 1996 Mandel, Charles. "Still-Life Showing so Conventional it's Uncongenial", Edmonton Journal. January 25, C5.
- 1993 "Time is Frozen in a Painter's Still Life Studies", Edmonton Journal. December.
- 1992 "Artist Follows Cezanne's Example", Edmonton Journal.

1989 Beauchamp, Elizabeth. "Summer Candid Pictures Can Lift Winter Mood", Edmonton Journal. December 2, D4.

## COLLECTIONS

Alberta Art Foundation  
Alberta Energy  
Alberta Treasury Branch  
Bennet, Jones  
Verchere  
Canada Council Art Bank  
Canadian Embassy: Beijing, China  
Canberra, Australia  
Chevron Oil  
Cliff Lede Wineries, Yountville, California  
Edmonton City Hall

Foreign Affairs  
Graceland University (Lamoni, Iowa)  
Interprovincial Pipeline  
Lethbridge Regional Hospital  
Norcen Resources  
Ocelot Energy  
Shaw Communications  
Suncor Energy  
Westin Hotels

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