

GARY MICHAEL DAULT, *Cereal Box Series #42, 2007*, Acrylic on board, 25.4 x 20.3 cm

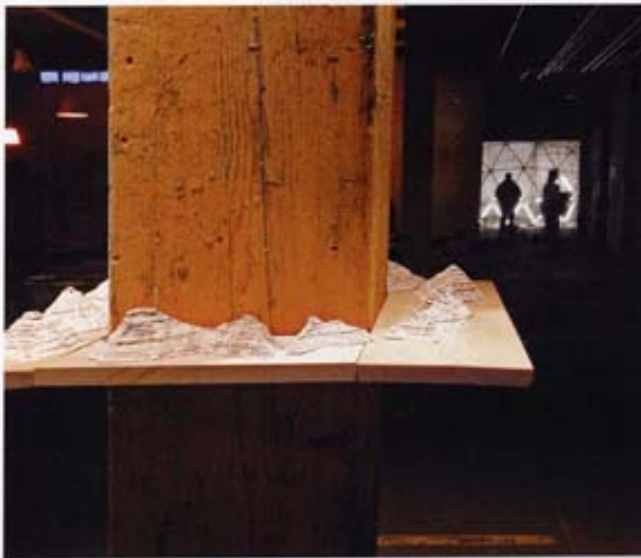


**Gary Michael Dault**  
GALLERY PAGE AND STRANGE, HALIFAX

Gary Michael Dault may be better known as a writer, art critic and poet, but through his entire creative life he has also been a painter. Dault simultaneously makes art and writes poetry, essays and criticism. His visual art is an integral part of his writing, just as his writing informs his painting. If he is at a loss for a word or phrase, he just goes down the hall and makes a painting. When he returns to the page, the word is there.

His show of paintings at Gallery Page and Strange in Halifax is not what you might expect from the title

Installation view of Jens Sclerotto's Relief Model, Proposal for Future Mountain Formation, 2006. Paper on wood shelf, 11.4 x 66 x 66 cm



of the exhibition: "An Hour's Worth of Landscape Painting: Sixty 1-Minute Paintings on Cereal Boxes." It's true that the support for the paintings is cereal-box card stock, echoing the Group of Seven's use of bookbinding card stock. And as in the Group's works, bits of ground show through, enhancing the surface and colour. But in Dault's work, it is not just that remnants of the cereal box show through; the design on the box also determines the composition. Again recalling the Group of Seven, these are luscious landscape paintings: a pile of Cheerios forms a hill, a blueberry becomes a moon and milk in a bowl is now water.

Yes, Dault limited himself to one minute to complete each painting, following the American Ashcan School painter Robert Henri's dictum: "Do it all in one sitting if you can. In one minute if you can." Dault turns Henri on his ear by doing an entire show in an hour! Someone asked Dault how paintings completed in just one minute could have any substance. His reply: "It took me 30 years to learn to paint them."

The art-historical referencing does not stop there. The cereal-box paintings are also serial paintings. This is not just a clever homonym. Warhol used repeated or serialized images to make paintings, but Dault does Warhol one better by serializing an entire exhibition. The establishment of strict parameters (format and time) forces the artist to be inventive. Creativity only comes with limits; as Sartre said, we are otherwise "condemned to freedom." **GERALD FERGUSON**

**MakingRoom**  
224 WALLACE AVE., TORONTO

"MakingRoom" can be described as an act of "extreme curating" by its organizer, the artist Heather Nicol. The exhibition was created with virtually no funding and involved around 60 artists from Canada and the U.S. It included video, installation, painting, drawing, performance, sculpture and new-media artists as well as jazz, choral and classical musicians, and occupied a borrowed and bare-bones 30,000-square-foot former sweatshop for a period of—yes, really—only two days. The participating artists were chosen for their ability to work with the space's enormous scale as well as for their attitude (the call for artists specified "no whiners"). Nicol herself supplied minimal installation assistance, lighting, electric cords and encouragement. Nearly 2,000 people attended.

On posters and press releases, the exhibition was described as "Making Room for you, making room for me...making room for Dorkbot, making room for eating and drinking beer and exchanging ideas, fan mail, phone numbers and manifestos..." At the Saturday-night opening—a noisy and packed affair where visual artists hung with musicians and theatre folks and teenagers and kids, and everybody talked, watched, ate and drank—many people said, "This doesn't feel like Toronto." It wasn't just the European-style grandeur the space afforded; it was

Installation view of Michael  
Bartosik's *King Judo* 2007  
Fluorescent tubes and aluminum  
3.65 x 7.31 m (12'0" x 24'0")

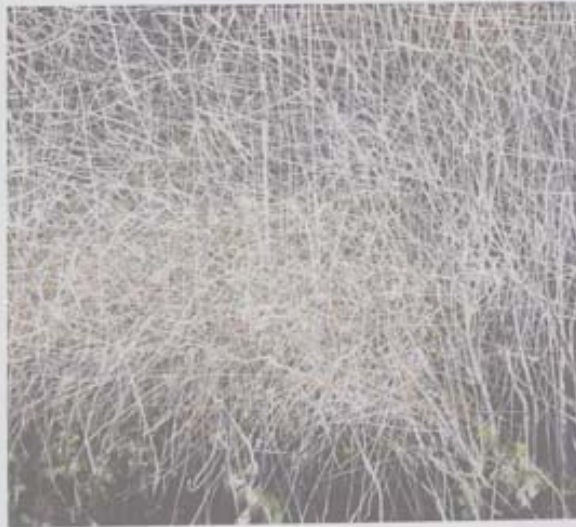


the show's crazy inclusiveness; young emerging sculptors could show their work next to that of a renowned sound artist, John Oswald.

With so much competition, the most successful works in "MakingRoom" responded actively to the space, playing with its scale and industrial rawness. Ed Pien's delicate, wall-sized *Big Orange Bird* cut-out, placed next to Susan Chrysler White's ephemeral "accordion" works with Nicol's own bittersweet, illuminated prom-gown sculptures nearby, made for a dramatic contrast with the warehouse grunge. Jenn Sciarrino's tiny *Relief Model: Proposal for Future Mountain Formation*, wrapped around an old wooden beam, was subtle and strangely sweet. In the back, Barbara Astman's light work from the *Clementine Suite* and Josh Avery's *Failure to Surrender* were equally poignant.

Performance works stood out as well—notably Dorkbot's demos and *Oui* (Becca Broughton and Andy Coppola), who drew a crowd for two days around four small holes, drilled in a wall, through which appeared copious amounts of birdseed, food and body parts like hands, mouths and a pubic mound. Two spectacular failures—Michael

GORDON SMITH *Whysell*  
Shore 2006, Acrylic on canvas  
1.82 x 1.77 m



Bartosik's enormous geodesic dome made of fluorescent tubes, which only neared completion by the end of the second day, and Adrian Blackwell's *Monster* sculpture, made of giant tractor tubes that fully deflated just before the opening—spoke to the exhibition's ambition and nerve, and contributed to an atmosphere of anticipation that was generated by so many artists coming together just because they wanted to. **JEN BUDNEY**

### Gordon Smith

EQUINOX GALLERY, VANCOUVER

To visit Gordon Smith at his home by West Vancouver's Lighthouse Park is to find oneself engulfed in the surrounding woods, even as the Arthur Erickson architecture asserts itself around you. In his adjacent studio, Smith—a vital octogenarian—has now maneuvered his masterful painting technique toward a level of abstraction that seems the inevitable result of a life lived intelligently both beside and inside nature.

Photograph a fireworks display with an old Polish camera and you'll get something like the effect of Smith's most abstract new offerings. White spangles, almost scratches, chatter about the canvas, covering the merest memory of a peat-and-brine landscape.

Three massive examples of this extreme daydream anchored his Equinox Gallery show. One of them, *Boach Tangle 2*, is a strange love child of Pollock and Monet. The bleached bone-white of driftwood logs has been ravified and cast like spun sugar over everything else. Any tidal pools and seaweed that might hover beneath are fully contained by Smith's obsessive lines. A fulsome barrier is the result, with minuscule quadrants of colour straining through the mesh.

The paintings are a testament to what Smith's close friends call a revolution in the painter's work. Unlike many senior artists, Smith has continued to challenge his own accomplishments, telling me that "most of what came before is no good." It's a severe criticism that stuns you when you hear his tone; impatient about his own artistic future, he looks forward, like a 15-year-old opening a first tube of Winsor & Newton. When I call him a landscape painter, Smith nearly cringes: "I hope I'm not just that." But the paintings aren't "just" anything. There is a sadness to these new abstractions that is appropriate to today's sense of a catastrophic finale to our centuries-long tryst with nature. **MICHAEL HARRIS**

### Laurel Woodcock

BANFF CENTRE, BANFF

Encountering Laurel Woodcock's wallthrough wall texts at the Banff Centre was akin to seeing fragments of an invisible narrative surfacing from the surrounding architecture. The artist selected excerpts of dialogue and stage direction from movie scripts, fashioned the words in adhesive lettering and installed them onto interior walls and doors. She matched her selections to ordinary locations such as