

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 

Douglas Coupland at Daniel Faria Gallery

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Until April 7, 188 St. Helen's Ave, Toronto

Meanwhile, Douglas Coupland's new collection of sculptures and paintings at Daniel Faria Gallery confidently and gracefully straddles the charming/ejaculatory divide.

Douglas Coupland is, of course, best known as a literary powerhouse, but he has always enjoyed a thriving parallel visual-art practice, one that is fuelled by the same buoyant populism (nicely salted with a deep suspicion of pop culture) found in his books.

Visitors to the gallery will find nothing on the walls or standing upright that they cannot immediately comprehend. The paintings include a series of large QR codes, rendered in black and white and muted colours, replicas of Group of Seven arctic landscapes recreated with grey-on-grey blocks and patterns poached from Atari-era digital design. A wall of printed panels, again in interior-decor-friendly muted tones, bear Coupland's futuristic musings. The wall works are accompanied by three spire-shaped sculptures made of rings of lacquered maple, in Fisher-Price colours.

That's the charming part. The unexpected, disarming element arrives on closer inspection.

If you have a phone that reads QR codes, the paintings will direct you to websites bearing cryptic, sometimes menacing messages. The landscapes are less an homage than a suggestion by the artist that perhaps, through overexposure, we have drained the Group of Seven canon of all meaning. The cheery slogan-bearing panels offer unnerving proposals, such as "In the Future We'll All Be Shopping from Jail." And the pretty maple towers are so heavily lacquered they look like plastic – plastic that will outlive, by thousands of years, any tree.

In Coupland's playhouse, all the shiny toys have sharp edges and are decorated with toxic paint.

-Vaughan, R. M. "Douglas Coupland at Daniel Faria Gallery," *The Globe and Mail*, February 17, 2012