

cally touching in the machine's tentative attempts at putting words to pictures. I felt a kindred soul in there. And just to see how *The Giver of Names* would see me, with the artist's tacit encouragement, I placed my head on the stand while the camera took my picture. It soon began to transform on the video screen as the machine broke it down into fragments, forms, colours, outline. It became a moving painting, changing rapidly, transforming incessantly while remaining within its borders.

Words, mostly disjointed and nonsensical, started running like subtitles under my fluctuating reconstituted portrait, too fast to recall but greatly entertaining in their irreverence.

The artists in this large in ideas but small in scope exhibition have made friends with technology, incorporating it into their creative environment with a particular panache, giving reign to their imagination and original talent, and inviting the viewer to interact with their creations.

The exhibition is free, as are all the shows at the MMEA until January 27, 2008, and a treat for anyone open to "the brave new world" of art.

Dorota Kozinska

ELAINE DESPINS

THE SEA INSIDE

October 10–November 11, 2007

Galerie Dominique Bouffard

1000 Amherst, suite 101

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Elaine Despins first caught my attention with her *Presence/Emergence* exhibition several years ago, in which she showed a series of 10 large format oil paintings (198cm x 143cm) examining the human body. Suspended against an

inky black background in the upper part of the painting, horizontal nude backs provoked an unforgettable visceral reaction. Vulnerable, oblivious to the viewers' curious stare, these embryonic shapes stood for the artist's exploration of the strength and fragility within each one of us.

Despins latest production, *The Sea Inside*, continues this inward/outward journey, as she analyzes that which we see and that which we don't, hidden within the human form.

First titled *Listening*, this new production follows the *Presence/Emergence* and the later *Virgin Mary* series, and emerges, as it were, from them, giving birth to a new visual landscape and symbolic lexicon. Gone is the contrast of the ebony background and the translucent skin, gone is the sharp light that seemed to envelop the curled-up body. In their place we have a shimmering, greenish space, and a new set of models.

It is still a body suspended in space and time, but this is very much an active participant in the composition. Young boys, several women, are quietly lying down on a transparent, reflective surface reminiscent of ice. They all face the viewer; eyes wide open but looking beyond, lost in a deep reverie, or perhaps, as the original title suggested, listening...

No more dark meditation, these works are infused with colour, albeit somewhat unnatural, adding a surreal touch to the otherwise

straightforward composition.

The cool, quiet mood and economy of colour in Despins latest works have echoes of Edward Hopper's silent landscapes, but her models are less alienated, and their gaze is difficult to ignore. These oil on canvas paintings are striking in their simplicity, and all lies in their masterful execution. It shows that Despins has come into her own with her latest series. There is a touch of play and experimentation in these works, as if the artist's has finally allowed herself to turn around and face her inner vision.

No need for deep analysis when looking at *Antoine or Simon*, portraits of young boys lost in their own world. Realistically executed without being saccharine, these wide-eyed children make mesmerizing models. We cannot help but stare into those dark eyes that seem to see something we cannot, something beyond, or perhaps within, as they lay quietly on their stomach, cheek to the cool, translucent surface that just barely reflects their features.

In some works, the bluish-greenish space enveloping them begins to form its own universe, folding upon itself, creating just barely recognizable contours. Could this be the harbinger of a new series in this young artist's career? A foray perhaps into the world of impressionism?

For now Despins remains fascinated with the body separated from its environment; there are no natural elements in her works, no adornments, just the body in a larger space, body "as vehicle", in the words of the artist.

The question behind these compositions: What do these eyes see? The answer it up to the viewer.

Simon
Oil on canvas
38 x 42 in.



With great originality in handling the medium, this intuitive and versatile artist has breathed life into these quiet portraits with delicate yet assured brushstrokes. They slowly sink into our own visual unconsciousness, speaking to our senses from within. Cool and serene, at times sombre, these faces are at once real and surreal, as are the paintings themselves.

Dorota Kozinska

HUGO WUTHRICH

THE ZIG AND THE ZAG OF ART

September 6-30, 2007

HAN ART

4209 St. Catherine St. W.

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Words could describe Hugo Wuthrich's art, but they can never recreate the experience of witnessing his art firsthand. There is a sense of joy, of exuberance and abundance. His art is open and accessible, whether the medium be set and costume design, painting or sculpture. Wuthrich's works are not trapped in time. On the contrary, they capture that sense of the moment we experience as children. There is something so simple and direct about these forthright paintings.

The way he uses colour, orchestrates to embellish these personalized scenarios he paints is brave, extravagant in a good way.

Ironically, there remains a tinge of the folk art gesture, of its hand made craft character in Wuthrich's paintings on view at Han Gallery that range from 1984 to 2007. The large scale painting titled *Three Heads* (2007), has an introspective, yet playfully sensitive tinge of humour to the expressive facial gestures of the heads, which are variations on a theme.

The whole Han Gallery Hugo Wuthrich show could be considered as a collective homage to an informal, essentially humanist perspective on life. Wuthrich's compositional style, catches our interest because it never takes itself too seriously, and when autobiography enters into these paintings, it is as if the artists were flirting with time, capturing moments with a mimetic abandon, as if all the world were a stage and the subjects within a paintings perpetual