



Balcony, 2001, by Frances Ferdinands.

Showdown, 2004, by Robert Waldeck.



Provocative paintings

UW Art Gallery exhibition finds a common ground in works by two artists who engage in an evocative anachronism

BY ROBERT REID
RECORD STAFF

The University of Waterloo Art Gallery continues its fall programming with the introduction of two series and a provocative painting exhibition.

BY APPEARANCES

By Appearances consists of paintings by Kitchener artist Robert Waldeck and Toronto artist Frances Ferdinands, curated by Virginia Eichhorn, curator of the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery.

The work of each artist deserves to be interpreted and evaluated separately. However, Eichhorn claims some common ground for both artists by examining their work in terms of the relationship between art and fashion.

Admittedly, it takes a little shoehorning to fit Waldeck's paintings into the theme, but it's clear there are similarities between the work of both artists.

Both engage in an evocative anachronism. Nostalgia, irony, satire and parody are weapons both artists have in their arsenals.

Ferdinands' erotically charged vignettes are set in the haute couture world of the 1930s and '40s.

Employing diptychs and text, Ferdinand juxtaposes psychosexual dramas that complement and contrast each other.

Seduction has a young, attractive debutante dressed in an evening gown ascending an elegant stairwell on one side, with three shirtless men on their hands and knees scraping a hardwood floor on the other side. The text reads: "and I find it inconvenient to be poor."

Featuring text that reads, "the most beautiful of all lies," Balcony shows two lovers on a hotel balcony in the midst of some sort of romantic/domestic drama juxtaposed with a well-heeled couple sitting in the balcony at the opera.

Meanwhile, Waldeck's surreal dramas are most at home in the B-movie, sci-fi world of the 1950s.

Mobsternauts: Red Planet Expedition blends two cultural stereotypes (astronauts and mobsters) which have been exploited by the popular entertainment media.

Meanwhile, Oh, the Places You'll Go shows a Warren Beatty look-alike as a slick gunslinger.

ROB RING: GREATEST HITS

Curated by gallery assistant Barbara Hobot, Rob Ring: Greatest Hits launches a new series showcasing video-based art, documentary work and vintage film to be screened on an ongoing basis at UWAG.

Ring, who studied at Brock University before receiving a master's degree in fine arts at the University of Guelph, is a

Kitchener video artist who combines elements of performance and body art.

Greatest Hits features three short videos that set out "to describe what it feels like to be alive."

Ring's intent sounds grandiose, but it's very much tongue-in-cheek.

After all, Milk Piece shows the artist kneeling on the floor, with his hands behind his back, licking milk out of a small glass placed on the floor in front of him — feline or doggy style. We hear him slurping as the glass moves around the floor.

Lesson 02 shows the artist standing on a two-by-four. He's bent over sawing the piece of lumber between his legs. Not surprisingly, he falls slapstick-style when he cuts through the board. We hear the sound of a saw cutting, but it's out of sync with the action.

Lesson 10, the longest and most compelling video, consists of a close-up of the artist's eyes. After about six minutes of not blinking his eyes begin to water, as if he's crying. The only sound is a little sniffing at the end of the video.

Like such silent film comedians as Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin, Ring uses his body to test the physicality of existence — often with humorous consequences.

Absurdist and surrealist, his videos are simultaneously captivating and repulsive, serious and comic. In other words, they're a lot like life itself.

PAVO URBAN: THE FINAL SEQUENCE

The Final Sequence is the first in an ongoing series of projects, under the title of Witness Project, which bear witness to conflict and change.

Co-curated by UWAG curator Andrew Hunter and Antun Maracic, director of the Museum of Modern Art in Dubrovnik, the installation features the last 12 photographs of Pavo Urban, a young Croatian art student killed during the shelling of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik on Dec. 6, 1991.

The photographs, which were salvaged from two cameras, have been mounted in the gallery and in the corridor immediately outside of the gallery.

The fact that Urban was not a professional photojournalist, but an amateur with artistic ability, lends poignancy to the photographs which are quietly solemn and eerily serene.

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ART EXHIBITS

Who: • By Appearances:
Frances Ferdinands and
Robert Waldeck
• Rob Ring: Greatest Hits
• Pavo Urban: The Final
Sequence

When: Through Nov. 30

Where: University of Waterloo Art
Gallery

Phone: 519-888-4567,
ext. 33575

Web: www.artgallery.uwaterloo.ca



Seduction,
2004-05,
by Frances
Ferdinands.