



HOME REVIEW LAUREL WOODCOCK



Installation view of 'Makingslow' by John Chiodi. Photo: © John Chiodi. Photo: © John Chiodi.

Bartolucci's enormous geodesic dome made of fluorescent tubes, which only reached completion by the end of the second day, and John Chiodi's Mentor sculpture, made of giant tractor tubes that fully defined and before the opening—like the exhibitor'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 BOONEY**

**Gordon Smith**  
GOUNDRI 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 sculptor—has now manifested his mastered painting technique toward a level of abstraction that seems the inevitable result of a life lived intelligently both beside and inside nature.

Photograph it through display with an old Polaroid camera and you'll get something like the effect of Smith's most abstract new offerings. White splatters, almost scratches, cluster about the canvas, concrete memory of a post and beam landscape. There's massive examples of this serene displacement in his Equinox Gallery show. One of them, *Brush Tangle*, is a strong low child of *Fielded* and *Mount*. The bleached bone white of dislodged logs has been needed and cut like open space over everything else. Any tidal pools and seaweed that might have been are fully contained by Smith's obvious lines. A fishbone barrier is the result, with minuscule quadrants of color straining through the rock.

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 comes before is no good." It's a severe criticism that stuns you when you hear his tone; impatience about his own artistic future he looks forward. In a 15-year-old opening a first tube of Winsor & Newton. When I call him a landscape painter, Smith nearly cripes. "I hope I'm not just that." But the paintings aren't "just" anything. There's a substance to these new abstractions that is appropriate to today's sense of a catastrophic finale to our century-long love with nature. **MICHAEL MERRILL**

**Laurel Woodcock**

Encountering Laurel Woodcock's walkthrough 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



hallways, stairwells and conference rooms—sites whose design and purpose facilitate temporary, fragmented experiences. The discreet instructions and dialogue resembled official signage, yet also alluded to the theatricality of institutional spaces and the roles that their occupants perform. Reflecting back on their architectural moorings, the script fragments implicated viewers in a narrative of disparate sites and situational cues.

Woodcock's intervention drew viewers into moments of self-conscious awareness. While ascending an enclosed stairwell one glimpsed the scripted instruction "[mumbling]" on a curved wall; negotiating a walkway connecting two buildings, one passed through doors that bore the script instruction "(CONT'D)"; elevator doors slid shut to reveal the scripted actions "[kissing]" or "[laughing]." Some of Woodcock's inscriptions acted as coy triggers of awareness; others engaged in a wry dialogue with the institutional context. High upon two facing walls in a conference room, the artist installed identical lines of dialogue: "What we have here is...failure to communicate." Credited to two different characters from the movie *Cool Hand Luke*, the lines mirrored each other over the room's occupants in a farcical loop.

Installation view of 'Walkthrough' by Laurel Woodcock. Photo: © Laurel Woodcock. Photo: © Laurel Woodcock.

**Michael Merrill**  
DALYAC ROGER BELLAMIE, MONTREAL

Spiders spin webs and shake their body with out-then abandon in Michael Merrill's paintings. For his spring exhibition, the gallery Roger Bellamie chose recent works from the artist's *Paintings about the series* and assembled them in a breathtakingly spare hanging that is a powerful statement in itself. In the first room, seven paintings and two multi-plex depict Louis-Boisgrou's *Manion* series of cut-out spider structures. One of these, a 30-foot tall sculpture in the collection of the National Gallery of

Gordon Smith Vancouver Photo: © Gordon Smith Photo: © Gordon Smith



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REVIEW

## Laurel Woodcock

Banff Centre, Banff

By John Marriott

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For more than a decade, Woodcock has explored language's capacity to convey conflicting texts and subtexts

simultaneously. In a 1990 work, interval, she used a pair of sculpted quotation marks to transform a blank wall into a quotation of space or a challenge, while the 2003 series wish you were here featured an airplane flying above Toronto, towing a trail of red letters that pronounced the title's sentiment to the city below.

With walkthrough we see a similar play of deadpan sensibility coloured by emotional undercurrents. Woodcock's integration of text and architecture brings to mind the observation of the architect and scholar Miwon Kwon: "... spatial experience, like the broken temporality of language, is discontinuous and creepily disembodied." Given that "walk-through" is a term used to describe a rehearsal in an early stage of production, Woodcock's inscriptions suggest that both our subjectivity and our relationship to our surroundings are works in progress.

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