

Things of Desire

Saugeen Land—Montreal

By Mike Landry



David Gillanders' painting, "Saugeen Land #11."

David Gillanders can't help it; he's just fascinated by the materiality of paint.

"It's an old fashioned attitude, but there's something really transformative about it. You can begin with anything, but when you begin working with paint the materials of have a kind of language and vocabulary and meaning in life that other materials don't."

Gillanders uses this vocabulary of paint to explore the question of perception. His latest series, *Saugeen Land*, concerns a walk he took through woods along Lake Huron. Working from video taken during the walk he's created a series of small textured, rich-green paintings on paper.

The distinct line and thick texture is new for Gillanders. His previous work was smoother and marked by a distinct blur. The new approach was the impetus for the series, and translates the density of the rural woods.

"I wanted to work on a couple of ideas in terms of paint handling. And I got going on these little paper studies. I thought I'd do a bunch of them and see what happened and in the end it became interesting and blossomed and I did quite a lot of them."

Gillanders doesn't always use video to capture images, but when he does it's with a special rig he's built. It's an open box with a spot for a cheap digital snap shot camera with a video setting. At 45 degrees to the direction of the lens pointing there's a blurry old mirror, to distort the images the camera records.

The results are beautiful, atmospheric video images, which are further augmented when Gillanders isolates stills on a computer and prints off the dislocated moments as reference points.

"In a very real sense [the paintings] are like stills. As you walk through from one work to another it's like motion in a way, through time (because each painting being a moment from time) and also through space (because the video being shot is me walking around)."

Through the many stages of alterations, the final images are quite separated from the original. Not that his version is any less true than the original for Gillanders. In altering his image he's doing justice to our perceptive faculties he feels are limited to begin with. In this light Gillanders paintings reflect nature on a plane far nearer to the natural than ordinary landscapes.

"In everyday life our perceptions are decent but limited, and very often imprecise and imperfect. All those separations between the original perception and the work of art contribute to that imperfection let's say.

I want to make a picture that is in a sense distinct but is interrupted in some way. The precision of it is undermined. So if the thing is blurred or fragmented it's a way to disrupt your understanding of the thing, and this [new work] is just another type of disruption."

Saugeen Land will be on display until Sun December 6 at [Le Méridien Versailles-Montreal](#) in Montreal.

Posted by admin

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