



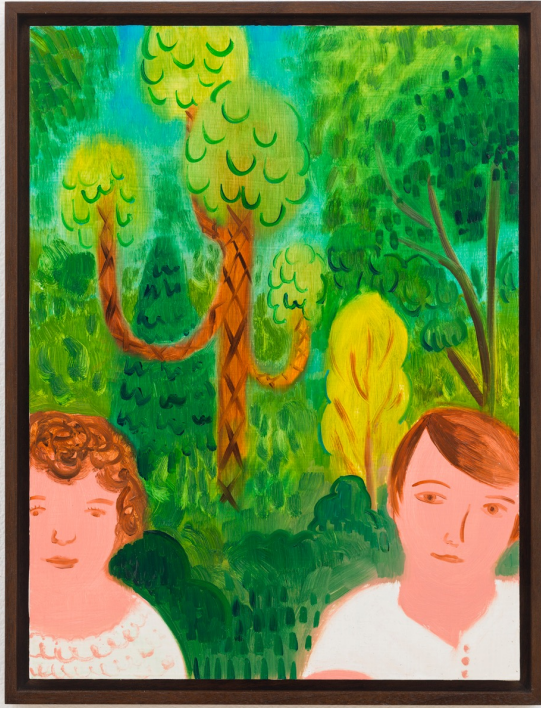
A Week of Canadian Painting: Andre Ethier

Because we are a Canadian-run publication and we admire those who continue to work with the arguably dated medium of paint, in the arguably dismal landscape of the Canadian art-world, we have decided to do a week-long feature on some of our favorite current Canadian painters, in no particular order. Stay tuned this week to see who we believe to be among the greatest established and emerging painters the Great White North has to offer!



Untitled, 2015. All images courtesy of Courtesy of Derek Eller Gallery, New York.

I've known Andre since I first moved to Toronto from the stultifying suburbs I escaped after almost finishing high school. We were involved in what was called the 'hardcore' scene. I had



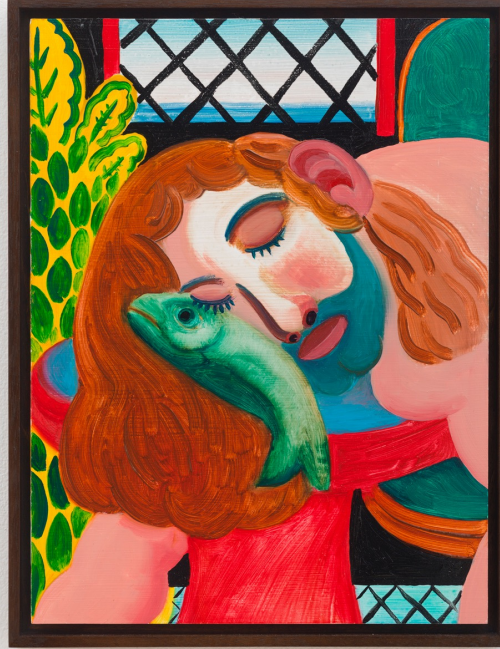
Untitled, 2015

and have no musical talent whatsoever. I didn't know Andre to be a musician until much later, when he was in a popular band that people tell me is 'garage rock' – but the solo records he's put out are music I understand, and they're beautiful, and I listen to them still. Andre has managed to do well what I attempt to do bumblingly: succeed in two creative fields, music and art. I knew Andre was studying art but I didn't know he made it himself until around 2000 when we shared a studio in Kensington Market. I was immediately stunned by his paintings and told anyone who would listen that they should see them and show them and buy them. I don't think anyone listened to me, but many other people shared my sense that Andre was doing something good and more importantly something original. The paintings at that time were small goopy paintings on panel he made using a lot of stand oil. They depicted all manner of trolls and Vikings and large-breasted women, bulbous-nosed men and almost frightening flora and fauna. At the time it seemed like he could make a dozen a day and it was rare that any of them failed. He quickly painted scenes from a fantasy

world of his own that also indicated a deep knowledge of art history. We both were supported by bon vivant Bruce Bailey for a short time, and Andre very quickly began showing his work in New York, then Los Angeles, then everywhere. For a young artist, for any artist, I can't think of anything more auspicious than your first two reviews being glowingly written by notoriously unglowing Roberta Smith in the New York Times. This happened to Andre. Between 2006-2009 Andre was showing everywhere. Having personal feelings for him, I worried that maybe he was showing too much. I didn't want to see my friend, who is as kind as anyone I know, fall victim to the three year art career that accompanies sudden early success. For a while after 2009, it felt like perhaps Andre had painted himself into a corner, that galleries were expecting, as they often do, 'product' that collectors are comfortable with. I remember him being unhappy. There was a period of experimentation and maybe withdrawal. When you have sudden success you're often robbed of time for reflection, for toying with failure. I moved back to Toronto a few years ago, and I saw Andre's new work at Paul Petro gallery, and I was happy to see that he'd changed pretty much everything. The work however seemed transitional. But transition is necessary and beneficial for an artist who wants to keep going, who has ambition and a unique sensibility. Fast forward to the fall of this year. Roberta Smith on Twitter continuing to sing the praises of Andre and the work in his new show, *Under Grape Leaves*, at *Derek Eller Gallery* in New York. The transition is over. The Vikings have left. Andre has reinvented a new, cleaner world in his paintings, populated by figures with proboscis noses, free of goop. The paintings are all simple, graphic, small and very strong. The portraits are disturbing in the quasi-animal-esque faces of the figures. The flora and fauna from the past work now resemble background cells from the Flintstones. Stand oil, so prone to making its own decisions about how the painting will dry, has been replaced by confident lines, simple compositions, and unsettling pairings of unknown creatures. It's hard enough to make it in the larger art world, that much harder to draw back, reflect, and return stronger than ever. Andre's completely new work shows signs of an artist who knows what he's doing, and can do it very well, and has relaxed into a confident simplicity that takes lesser artists decades to accomplish in a single painting. I'm happy he's back. – Brad Phillips



Untitled, 2015



Untitled, 2015

Where did you grow up? What was the landscape like?

I grew up in Toronto, Bathurst and Bloor. That's pretty downtown, so not much landscape. Mostly concrete.

Do you think being Canadian has had any impact on your work?

I'm sure that being Canadian has had some sort of effect on my work. Maybe in my general temperament. It's hard to say and I don't think about much really.

What is your favorite medium to work with?

I paint in oil on masonite pretty exclusively. I kind of stopped drawing or sketching years ago and focused just on painting. Now I suck at drawing, all my instincts are for paint and what paint does on the masonite. I can't even switch to canvass. (lately "Drawing" seems to be creeping into the paintings, so I guess I'm my own worst enemy.)

What themes do you work with, if any?

I don't plan my paintings much further than the colours I start with, so I'm not consciously working with any themes. Years later I can recognize themes in the work. Pride, disgust, fear, love, escape, are all themes I guess.. or motivations, ha! Barf

Are you inspired by any Canadian painters?

I like a lot of Canadian painters, but these days I'm most inspired by Jay (Issac) Brad (Phillips) and Darby (Milbrath). They are all so committed to their work in such a personal way, I find it inspiring. They are so different from each other but they are all saying the same thing to me.

Is there any one painter who has influenced your work more than others?

Jay, if you mean in a concrete way- not like who's my favorite painter from history. I don't really keep a favorite.

Are you drawn to any particular historical art movement?

I'm drawn more to regions than movements, in painting, but they're all made up. Lately I've been walking around thinking I like "Italian" paintings and wanting my paintings to be more "Italian", but I don't know what that means and I don't want to think about it anyway.

Do you consider your work to be political?

You know what? sometimes when I think about my work, I see some sociopolitical overtones and it kind of bums me out because they are in opposition to my sociopolitical beliefs.

What do you think is missing from the Canadian art scene?

I don't know. Probably money