

Visual arts student honoured by Willowdale Group launches solo show at York

February 18, 2009

Alex Fischer, a fourth-year student working towards his BFA in visual arts, is the recipient of the 2008-2009 Willowdale Group of Artists Painting Award. The award recognizes exceptional achievement in painting by an upper-level undergrad student who is continuing to study the medium. The beneficiary receives \$1,250 and the opportunity to present a solo show in York University's Gales Gallery.

Fischer's exhibit, *Backwater Resolution*, will be on view Feb. 16 to 20 in the gallery (105 Accolade West Building). It features paintings and digital stills articulated around the relationship between contemporary art and urban-identity situations.

Right: Alex Fischer

"I originally had *Backwater Resolution* as a title for one of my paintings," Fischer says. "But I decided it was a better fit for the exhibit as a whole. Backwater to me is a stagnant pool, full of organic material. Resolution has two meanings that apply to my show: digital resolution is a measurement of the pixels per inch in a computer image, and a resolution is an answer or a solution to opposing sides. Together it speaks to the bridge I'm building between mechanical and digital art creation and the juxtapositions I create between urban and wild imagery."

Primarily working with large-scale acrylics and digital environments, Fischer's long-standing interest in computers has had a big impact in his work. Learning through experimentation, he enjoys the power digital images provide to capture "certain things that can't be painted". Research to find like-minded visual artists led him to the discovery of a relatively new genre in the art world called expanded painting.

"Expanded painting is really any sort of painting that has been helped along by other means, using technology, mixed media and projections et cetera," Fischer explains. "My show connects to this movement because I apply the same process and esthetic to my paintings and to my digital works. I establish similarities to banish the differences."

Whether painting or working on the computer, Fischer's approach to art-making is the same. He starts with a collection of images as inspiration, drawn from both the painting and photography communities. After deciding on the general look and feel of what he wants to achieve, he starts with the most critical element in the composition. He continues with a post-abstract impressionist approach, stepping back, evaluating the flow of the image and judging what he does next by what's already on his canvas or screen.

For the opening reception of *Backwater Resolution*, which will take place tonight from 6 to 9pm, Fischer has invited several musician friends who have inspired him in many ways. Jordaan Mason, Miss Scarlett and Whatever Jailer will contribute acoustic performances to the occasion.

Since announcing his exhibition, Fischer has received several invitations to show his work to gallery directors downtown with potential interest in future exhibitions.

"I'm grateful to York University and the Willowdale Group for this opportunity," says Fischer. "I appreciate being recognized for the quality of my work, and the fact that a campus show is opening other doors for me is really great."

The Willowdale Group of Artists is a community-based association dedicated to the art of painting. They have been supporting visual arts students at York since 2000. Members meet weekly and participate in regular workshops, life drawing sessions and demonstrations as well as annual group exhibitions.

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