

The reward of persistent folly

GALLERY GOING GARY MICHAEL DAULT

Kim Dorland at Angell Gallery
\$4,000-\$14,000. Until Oct. 14,
890 Queen St. W., Toronto;
416-530-0444

There was something about Toronto artist Kim Dorland's admittedly vivid but hectic paintings that always gave me pause — and sometimes actively put me off. I pegged my dissatisfaction (which was clearly in opposition to the swelling choruses of praise for Dorland that I heard from all sides) on his slash-and-burn carving in paint of the animals and people that always seemed so jaggedly juxtaposed in his boyishly exuberant paintings. And his ingenuous, naive colour? I didn't think much of it, either.

Now, with this exhibition of new paintings at Toronto's Angell Gallery, I've had to change my mind and join the choirs of acclaim. The odd thing is, the very qualities I found off-putting in previous Dorlands — the rude cut of his palette

knife, the acidity of his colour (all those back-porch greens, heavy, woody browns and adolescent reds) — have now been intensified and accelerated nearly to the edge of pictorial anarchy, to the point where he's somehow pushed himself through all that apprentice stuff and come out the other side. Poet William Blake said something about that, about persisting in your folly until you become wise.

Anyhow, I walked into the Angell Gallery the other day to talk to owner Jamie Angell about something else, and there were these eyeball-searing Kim Dorlands, as hectic and bratty as usual but now way, way more so. Or so they struck me.

New Home is hanging in the gallery's front window. I like the dark, vertical trees in the background, crisscrossed with the swampy, pink horizontals of the foreground. And I like the way the blue-white mobile home in the middle, carved so skillfully from heavy planes of pigment, holds the whole work together.

The exhibition is anchored by two very large paintings — much larger than I've ever seen Dorland make — that are so forceful they make your eyes water. One, *Wooded Area*, is a large, dark-green camp-

ground with chess-board figures (which I still find unsatisfying) standing about here and there. It's the way Dorland has applied the paint that makes this big oil-and-acrylic monster so tasty. The other — an even better painting called *National Park* — is so hot and heavy with kilo upon kilo of orange paint smeared, smashed and thrown upon it (there are gobs of paint here as big as hamburger patties), you feel like heaving a bucket of ice water over it.



Rude cuts and acidic colours: Dorland's *New Home* is admirably hectic