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Dorland's styles collide

Stylistic tension reflects the pent-up violence in the painter's work **By DAVID JAGER**



Kim Dorland's *Bridge 2* looks a lot like the bridge where Kurt Cobain hung out.

KIM DORLAND at Angell Gallery
(890 Queen West), to October 14.
416-530-0444. Rating: **NNNN**

THE TEENAGERS IN KIM DORLAND'S new series of paintings stand about in wary clusters, drinking and drugging, smoking and fighting against the backdrop of the raw, wide open Alberta landscape.

Carved into the paintings' surface, dabbed or smeared into being with

gestural violence, they stand aloof against a rich riot of earth colours painted over a searing undercoat of electrically charged neon pink and green.

You could almost call the effect grunge. Dorland's alienated youths recall the skinny rockers of 90s suburbia, stuck where modern emptiness and the rural landscape collide. Some references might be directly linked to Kurt Cobain: *Bridge 2*, with its two teenagers smoking in the creek bed

beneath a grimy overpass, looks strikingly like the Seattle bridge Cobain slept under from time to time.

These ambivalent figures unify the show. *Wooded Area* shows them at a late-night party in a meadow; *National Park* depicts someone feeding a chip to a deer out of a parked Ford; and in *New Father* a lone young guy with a six pack of beer ponders his life on a tree stump.

The wariness and pent-up violence in each scene carry over into the painterly tension between the formal and the representational. Some areas are filled with thick, textured paint that pushes toward the abstract, and in other places paint is just flung at the canvas to lend colour or weight. Is that a rock, a root or a blob? Dorland lets these two stylistic approaches duke it out engagingly on the canvas.

In *Fist Fight No. 12*, the near stick figures are reminiscent of doodles the long-haired pothead sitting next to you in high school was scribbling in the margins of his textbook. They're caught up, however, in a skilful blur of slashes and paint-knife strokes that verge on action painting, melding formal concerns with an earlier naive style. Call it art brut meets art school.

It takes imagination to pit these styles against each other, and solid painterly chops to make it work. ©

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