

Jason Gringler

ANGELL GALLERY, TORONTO



JASON GRINGLER *woods 8* 2005 Acrylic, collage, glitter, resin on canvas
over board 61 x 91.4 cm

If you go down to the “woods” today, you’re in for a big surprise... No, not a teddy bears’ picnic (way more twisted than that), but a damn good assembly of obsessively fetishistic paintings by someone whose pictorial picnic is a sumptuous one indeed.

Like most gifted painters, Jason Gringler is what I like to call a peripheral visionary: he can see the future, and paint it too, especially what might exist at the edges of the periphery. Our edge is his home. If you imagine a mythical rendezvous between Dante, Beckett and *Blade Runner*, you’ll have an impression of the hedonistic montage of images in his recent exhibition.

Let’s call this place “yestermorrow.” It looks like an expressionistic snapshot of heaven and hell: a near-Biblical forest of metallic trees doing things trees don’t usually do; a Bosch-like realm of figural abandonment, minus even the sympathetic eyes of any caring God.

And yet these images, all titled *woods* and numbered in sequence, were not as melancholy as this landscape of absence sounds at first. In fact, they were downright cheery. Gringler has created a peculiarly tantalizing *fabula*, an ongoing story that tells itself to us in images that transcend genre. They pull us forward, they push us back: they’re visual vitamins.

I felt the emotional equivalent of vertigo, especially viewing *woods 7* and *woods 8*, with their dizzying networks of oblong roots glossing an elegant emerald and a scalding acidic-blue ground respectively. We don’t know if we are seeing the roots intersecting and strangling each other underground or whether we’re floating above the top branches looking down; maybe the roots themselves are emerging from the sky above. Roots in the sky, that’s my bet. Either way, it is a marvellous narrative, and an accomplished pilgrimage through the roots of fine painting. And those roots do not grow on terra firma. Like its sister poetry, painting is a search for the inexplicable. Submitting to opulent pictures like these is a pleasure, perhaps even a guilty pleasure. They are what the inexplicable looks like. DONALD BRACKETT