



Faculty of Art

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Review: Sheila Ayearst

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described through disciplinary categories—sculpture, photography, drawing and architecture—the status of these categories is called into question. The work necessitates second thought. In a curious way, its references to historical formalism, architectonic perspectivism, photographic objectivism and so on are inflected by less structured aesthetic models such as doodling or providing open space for strolling and social interaction. The artist seems to want us to ask ourselves: what do we see?

With the prevalence of the image in art and the media—and the suspicion that attends its supposed objectivity and openness to rhetorical appropriation—it is interesting to see art that plays with the problems, without trying to make us believe it holds out some kind of truth.

FRANÇOIS DION

Sheila Ayeartst

WYNICK/TUCK GALLERY, TORONTO

For more than a decade, Sheila Ayeartst has been painting in a classical manner: the image a sienna underpainting, with a series of different glazes slowly submerging it in colour. In her exhibitions, she has taken up the works of Ozias Leduc, Homer Watson and Jack Chambers, claiming the artists as her patrimony while reassessing the images they used, darkening their often transcendent light. The deliberately dated technique was the key that allowed her to

unlock the art of the past that she both admired and doubted. Where she used to focus on the work of individual artists, Ayeartst's concern now seems to be the genre that was the underlying support for much of their work: landscape painting.

The paintings in her latest exhibition, "Supports and Barriers," each depict either a concrete barrier or a supporting column for a highway overpass. The title of course is emotionally suggestive, and the paintings do seem to exist in a larger field of persons and social structures that help or hinder. Colour is usually kept to a sensuously austere range of greys, silvers and blacks, so that the few intensely coloured paintings stand out. The "Supports" paintings are all hung high on the wall, high enough to correct their upward-looking perspective. *Ash Barrier*, which is painted the actual size of a highway barrier, is hung low, so that the top of the painting is where the top of a barrier would be. The effect is to tug at you bodily, to make it clear that viewing is physical activity. Most of the "Barriers" are small paintings hung at a standard height. Their heavy black frames suggest windows, yet the images both lure sight and block it at the same time. In denying the immediate pleasure of looking into landscape's distance, the paintings are more than merely frustrating; they are signs of an almost ferocious privacy.

With vision's path into space blocked, feelings seem to flood out from the works (as the titles *Weeping Support*, *Memorial Barrier* or *Sarcophagus* suggest). *Ash Barrier*



RON TERADA 1, 986, 965 2002 3M reflective highway vinyl, extruded aluminum, industrial lights, galvanized steel, wood 3 x 3 x 1.5 m

is easily the most anguished painting I've seen in years. Picturing a concrete barrier washed by black rivulets that pour down its surface, it seems to abound in painterly analogues to mourning and devastation. Some of the blacks are like soot, as though darkness had been burned onto the painting. Different washes suggest a rain carrying ashes, or the torn black silk threads of a shredded veil. At the bottom of the painting, darkness seeps up, like black mold or rot. The washes that should make a deep space into which the barrier recedes instead pour past it. They flatten the painting and sever us from the barrier and its space. White highlights added after these black washes are weirdly isolated from the rest of the image. One highlight even occurs slightly above what should be its proper place. It hovers like a dislocated ghost, a light in pouring darkness.

ANDY PATTON

Ron Terada

CATRIONA JEFFRIES GALLERY, VANCOUVER

The installation is simple: a life-size road sign fills the gallery space, proclaiming "ENTERING CITY OF Vancouver." The press release for this latest show by Ron Terada informs us that the sign "claims" Vancouver, creating new borders around the artists of that city and the construct of the very gallery in which this work is shown." The



SHEILA AYEARTST *Ash Barrier* 2002 Acrylic on canvas 1 x 2.7 m PHOTO CHERYL O'BRIEN