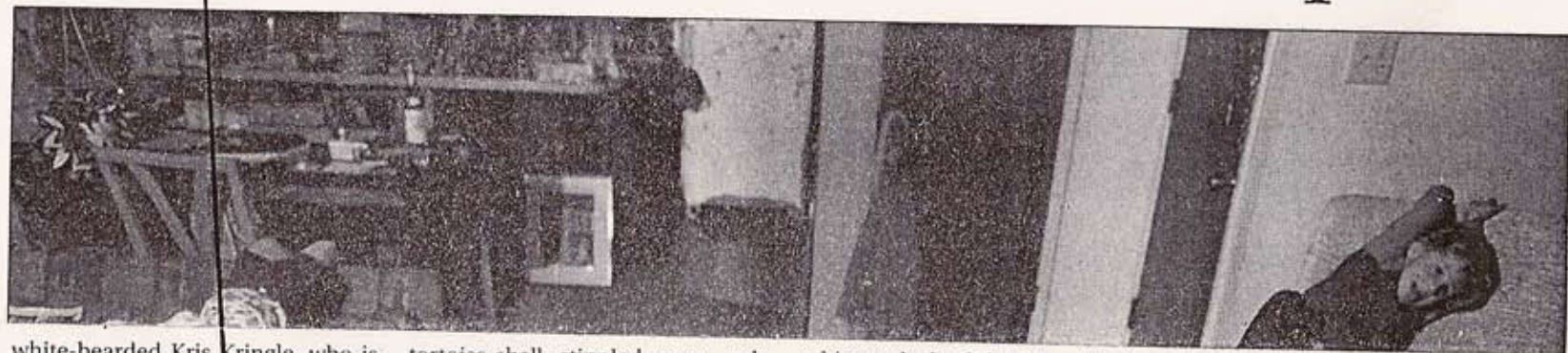


raphy show gives laundry a universal spin

GALLERY GOING

GILLIAN MACKAY

put the sentence, "I am trying to talk to you in the dark." The interest of the work, which was created for York, is that the camera is pointed inside the mouth. When subject (Smith) breathes, there is a white mist that is reminiscent of the early 19th-century naive style, who has a sense of humour about her mouth and what she Austen would have called "fine arts." A dreamy-eyed William Tomson, architect of Toronto's St. Michael's Cathedral and St. Lawrence Hall, received subtle, sensitive treatment at the hands of an unknown portraitist in 1830. Later, portraitists used more drama. In 1898, artist George Reid depicts his colleague, Marmaduke Matthews, a landscape painter and the underdog of the Wychwood Park community, as a kind of visionary figure. Perhaps the most engaging fiction is that of Toronto's first librarian, James Bain, whose portrait was painted from a photograph shortly after his death in 1878. British artist Sir Edmund Grier casts Bain as a twinkly,



white-bearded Kris Kringle, who is caught looking up from his reading at his book-laden desk — a jolly patron saint for the library. *Until March 5, 789 Yonge St., Toronto. 416-393-7131.*

Cliff Eyland at the Art Gallery of Ontario

A beguiling installation at the AGO, the 13th in the gallery's successful Present Tense series, presents faux antique books as objects of desire. Winnipeg artist Cliff Eyland, who paints on three-by-five-inch blocks of wood, has installed 78 such blocks in a line at eye-level on a gallery wall. He has painted each one in a rich warm brown base, with a stripe for a "binding" and a subtle decorative finish such as mottled

tortoise-shell, stippled green, pebbly grey or wavy blue, then distressed them to simulate age and wear. There are no titles or any such *trompe l'oeil* fakery. It is as though he has distilled the essence of his subject, like a perfume, along with the kind of longing aroused by faded pages, marbled papers and well-worn leather. An old-fashioned wooden library-card filing cabinet is the second component of Eyland's project, which was curated by Christina Ritchie. Eyland has filled its two drawers with pen-and-ink doodles; photocopied images from art history books; and filing cards containing index numbers and quotes from particular books in the AGO library. (For example: Marcel Duchamp's "My capital is time not money," from page 381 of

a biography by Calvin Tomkins.)

Riffling through the card file, picking up its distinctive scent, we experience the thrill of the intellectual hunt. Meanwhile, in the "real" card file of the AGO library, Eyland has inserted his drawings at random, a nod to a subversive

practice begun when he was a student 20 years ago. Hierarchies and their potential for democratization are an issue here, also the enduring appeal of the hand-held and the handmade. *Until Feb. 27, 317 Dundas St. W., Toronto. 416-979-6648.*

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