

# ARTS

## The pop forecast

Thor arrives with superhero-sized anticipation, **E6**



## A flashy Alice

Ballet captures the wonder but loses the story, **E3**



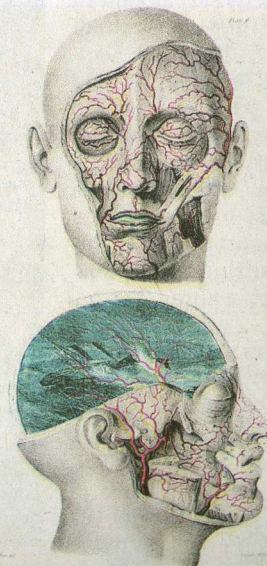
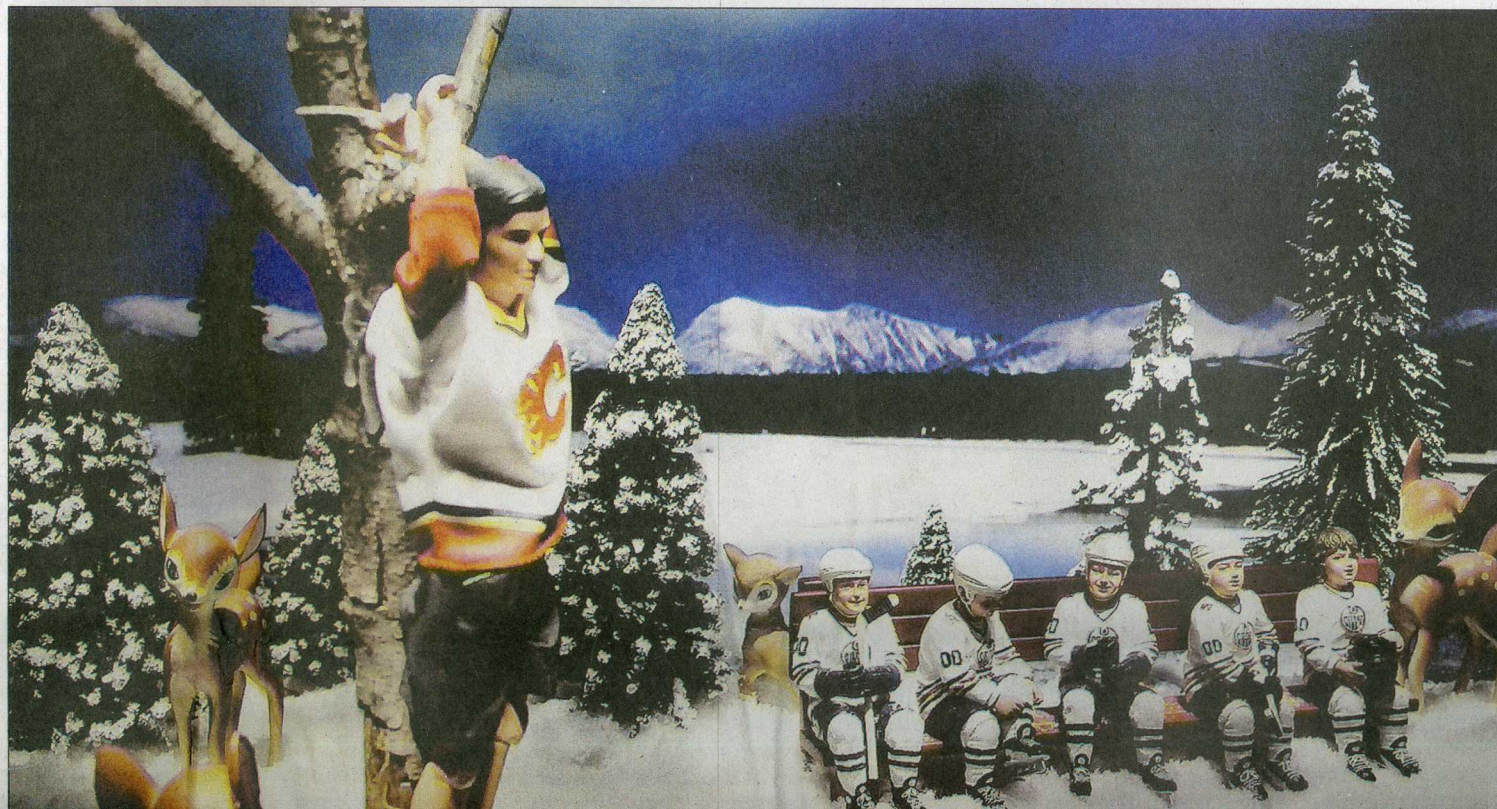
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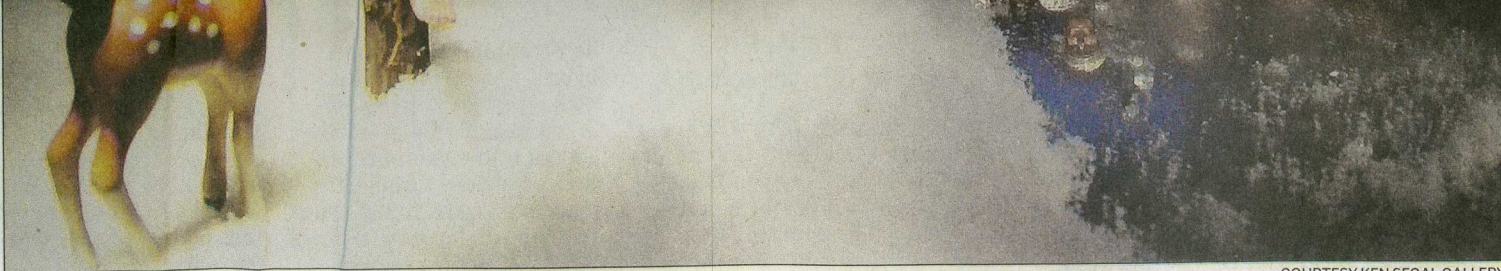
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THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, SECTION E



COURTESY PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

Left, the unforgettable Martyrdom at the Rink is by Diana Thorneycroft, one of the most compelling artists working in Canada today. Above, Cindy Stelmackowich's Disaster Series Triptych is grotesque but sympathetic.



COURTESY KEN SEGAL GALLERY

# Prairie visions

Forget grain silos and wheat fields. The edgy art on display from Manitoba and Saskatchewan ranges from private parts behind black curtains to subversive hockey photographs.



PETER SIMPSON  
BIG BEAT

What does art from the Prairies look like? Is it flat? Shaped like a hay bale? Is it a modernist sculpture of a mos-

quito to the size of a Winnipeg seagull? Is it a penis, or a whole flock of them, carved from driftwood and likely, if you're very, very tall, to bang you on the head?

A tour through seven of the 16 visual arts exhibits that are part of the National Arts Centre's Prairie Scene found little that singularly speaks of Manitoba or Saskatchewan, though perhaps I was rattled into inattentiveness by that flock of penises overhead. They're part of *Winter Kept Us Warm*, which is behind black curtains at Arts Court — "in the naughty room," as one tit-

tering visitor put it.

*Winter Kept us Warm* is surely the most provocative of Prairie Scene's exhibitions, with paintings, drawings and sculptures of male and female genitalia. It can be overwhelming — really, the show has more exposed organs than a Christian music store — and the best of the pieces are those that rise above shock value.

Louis Bakó's *The Holy Crack (Homage to Lucien Fontana)* is a garish red slash on a small canvas, and it is violent and disturbing. On the other end of the emotional scale are Richard Williams'

lithographs of what appears to be a group picnic turned into a happy outdoor orgy. Usually it's the ants that get into everything at a picnic, but at this one everything gets into everything. It's shamelessly funny but not superficial, as naked children grasp for guidance while the adults frolic.

Otherwise, the most compelling pieces in *Winter Kept Us Warm* are those that are less explicit, such as Andrew Valko's paintings *Skype Connect* and *Hockey Night in Canada*, each of which shows a young woman standing naked before a laptop

or TV. They are exquisitely composed and highly erotic.

Filmmaker Guy Maddin's collages are surreally funny, as you'd expect. Next to them is Karel Funk's brilliant, untitled acrylic painting of a figure hidden beneath the hood of a raincoat. As in a similar painting at the National Gallery, Funk has turned a pedestrian coat into a thing of deep and mysterious beauty. It seems out of place amid the more sexual imagery, but coats do keep us warm, so there you go.

See PRAIRIE on page E2

and culture from Manitoba and Saskatchewan continues to May 8 at various locations around town. Some art exhibitions will remain open after that date.

**Information:** For a schedule and more information about other events, including music, visual arts, theatre, dance, comedy and food, see [prairiescene.ca](http://prairiescene.ca)

## ARTS

# Prairie: I felt repulsed, yet oddly drawn in

Continued from page E1

Downstairs at Arts Court is the show *Mind the Gap*, a familiar phrase from the London tube system, and which here refers to Saskatchewan as the “gap province” in Canada. The show is underwhelming, with no common thread — a difficult thing to achieve in a group show based on geography and not on, say, medium or subject. It does include distinctly Saskatchewan images in Tim Moore’s small piece *Deer Hunter with Gabriel’s Horse, Rifle and Beaded Leg Straps*. (One assumes it’s Gabriel Dumont, the storied, 19th-century Metis leader.) And Moose Jaw’s Gabriella Garcia-Luna has two richly lit “blue” photographs of individuals sitting alone outside at night, waiting, but for what?

Downstairs at Arts Court, in SAW Gallery, there’s a collection of conceptual video and sound pieces from Winnipeg, titled *Take Me To Your Leader, Lead Me To Your Taker*.

The first thing that grabs your eye when you walk into the gallery is the glowing, flickering pinkness coming from a room to your left. Attached to the wall inside is neon, cursive text that says, “I’m f---ing you” (There are



A work entitled *Jack*, by Cliff Eyland, is part of the provocative *Winter Kept Us Warm* exhibit.

like a moth that knows it’ll be, well, cooked if it gets too

more on the Big Beat blog.) The highlights of the exhibi-

way, they absorb you.

Over at the National Arts Centre, the hub of all things

and you can paint one of 4,000 tiny bison that will be placed on the map to “repopu-

standard motif, which would have said, “Never mind the bollocks, here’s the bison.”)

Upstairs at the NAC is *A Prairie Snapshot*, with pieces from the Canada Council Art Bank, and here the real power of Prairie art shines through. Projected in large format onto the foyer wall is Edward Poiras’ vintage photo of seemingly displaced Natives with text added — “The Amazon is burning,” and “While you play bingo.” The images hang over the celebrations below like an indictment.

On the second level are other pieces with visceral appeal. Cindy Stelmackowich’s *Disaster Series Triptych* combines drawings of anatomical dissections with visible thoughts of burning buildings and sinking ships, and the result is grotesque yet sympathetic.

Then there’s *Martyrdom at the Rink*, an example of the hilariously subversive photo dioramas of Diana Thorneycroft. A male doll in NHL uniform hangs from a tree, tied by his arms and legs, as Bambi figures and a bench of laughing hockey players look on. The photo caused an uproar when it was unveiled a few years ago, as some people felt it was a parody of the crucifixion. Maybe it is, maybe it isn’t, but either way it’s an un-

Continued from page E1

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The first thing that grabs your eye when you walk into the gallery is the glowing, flickering pinkness coming from a room to your left. Attached to the wall inside is neon, cursive text that says, "I'm f---ing you." (There are no dashes in the actual sign.) The piece is titled *The Postulation of Reality*, by Divya Mehra, and rarely has such a blunt declaration been writ so gleefully. Bathed in the flickering, pink light, I felt both repulsed yet oddly drawn in,



A work entitled *Jack*, by Cliff Eyland, is part of the provocative *Winter Kept Us Warm* exhibit.

like a moth that knows it'll be, well, cooked if it gets too close to the light, yet cannot resist.

A few blocks away at the National Gallery is the exhibition of works from 30 years of Wanda Koop, the Winnipeg artist. (The show has been open for two months. See

more on the Big Beat blog.) The highlights of the exhibition are Koop's recent, huge paintings of isolated figures standing before ambiguous grey screens. They make you feel small, even if you can't decide whether the screens represent technology or a broader contemporary reality. Either

way, they absorb you.

Over at the National Arts Centre, the hub of all things Prairie Scene, there are interesting things in the lobby. Adrian Stimson has a playful, participatory installation titled *Re-Herd*. There's a large white board shaped like Manitoba and Saskatchewan,

and you can paint one of 4,000 tiny bison that will be placed on the map to "repopulate" the vast herds that once covered the Prairies. When I dropped by there were three tables clogged with people painting mini buffalo in a vast array of designs. (Alas, the bison were too small for my

standard motif, which would have said, "Never mind the bollocks, here's the bison.")

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## Sly: A thrill to work

### Idol critic Daltrey wanted to be a judge

Veteran British rocker Roger Daltrey, a vehement critic of

half-vampire/half-human hybrid — according to the books, the baby cracks Bella's spine and ribs, and is delivered by her vampire rela-

tivity under wraps. The actress parted ways with *Saturday Night Live* star Jason Sudeikis in January after six months of dating. No word