

Too Toronto-centric? I have no problem with that



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I hereby declare 2011 the Year That Toronto Stops Apologizing – for being the biggest, for being the smartest (okay, not so much with the voting), and for being the largest, most vibrant art engine in Canada. There, I said it.

Since I started this job, I've had multiple conversations with curators who tell me that they feel pressured to not be "too Toronto" in the shows they compose, or in their institutional scheduling. This is crazy talk. No other city on the planet worries about being too much like the actual city it is. But Torontonians are constantly overcompensating for the inferiority complexes of other Canadian cities, and our curatorial class, in a demented act of art world penance, will go to great lengths to exclude quality work right under its nose.

Co-dependency is unhealthy, for both sides. Furthermore, all we do when we exclude our own is drive them to other cities (and then, perversely, once they are celebrated in said other cities, we ask them back, offer them the big rooms, because they've been de-Torontoized). Why not break the cycle?

Here are a handful of shows happening right in your neck of the not-woods, all within the next year. Stop apologizing and start patronizing (in the good way).



Kim Dorland's work gives the viewer a full, sensual experience.

unforgiving, stern mullahs.

If anything, they are rather ordinary, lovely in an un-hyperbolic, easy-to-miss way.

ing, banging, booming, screeching, and possibly feather and glitter dappled paintings. Lately, Dorland's stretching (via a laws

give the viewer a full, and full-bodied, sensual experience.

If you don't walk away from a Dorland show rubbing your eyes, you must be wearing Yoko Ono-style wraparounds. Better lurid than lulling.

Teri Donovan at Redhead Gallery

June 22 to July 16,
Suite 115 – 401 Richmond St. W.,
www.redheadgallery.org

One of my favourite painters has her first Toronto show in two years, after sending her work across the province, much to the delight of the locals.

Donovan's style benefits from emphasizing everything that Dorland's style benefits from ignoring – the patient application of paint, a nearly worshipful approach to the materiality of her canvases, and a palpable internal rigour. Both artists, however, are ultimately epicureans – Donovan's themes are more mature, especially so in her portraits, but she is no miser. Her paintings are liquid, twilight dreams, dreams dappled with sharp, pointed moments of figurative realism (to keep us on our toes) and no end of delicious decorative flourishes.

A controlled reveller, Donovan gives her paints a drink or two, then sits them down for a hard talk.

Centre for Incidental Activisms at the Art Gallery of York University

Jan. 19 to March 14,
York University,
www.yorku.ca/agy

Featuring works by veteran film/video artists Deanna Bowen and Elle Flanders, the cheekily named group show (CIA, get it?)

IN OTHER VENUES

John Monteith
Lost Highway
O'Born Contemporary
Until Jan. 29,
131 Ossington Ave., Toronto

Multi-talent Monteith, never content with one medium, presents five paintings, plus a work comprised of 100 layered together photographs, and 50 text drawings – all dealing with the ever-shifting complexities of urban landscapes. Imagine his coffee bill.

Atrophic Existence

Show & Tell Gallery
Until Jan. 10,
1161 Dundas St. W., Toronto

A noisier companion piece to Monteith's exhibition, this group show focuses on urban environments as spaces ripe for irruptive interventions – graffiti, temporary sculptures, and guerrilla gardening. I'd name the artists, but I don't want anybody spending the New Year in the hoosegow.

Kai Chan

David Kaye Gallery
Until Jan. 16,
1092 Queen St. W., Toronto

If Chan's retrospective at the Textile Museum whets your appetite for more from the master of insect-delicate sculptures, you'll love this survey of his recent works – works that highlight Chan's understated, oddball sense of humour.

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