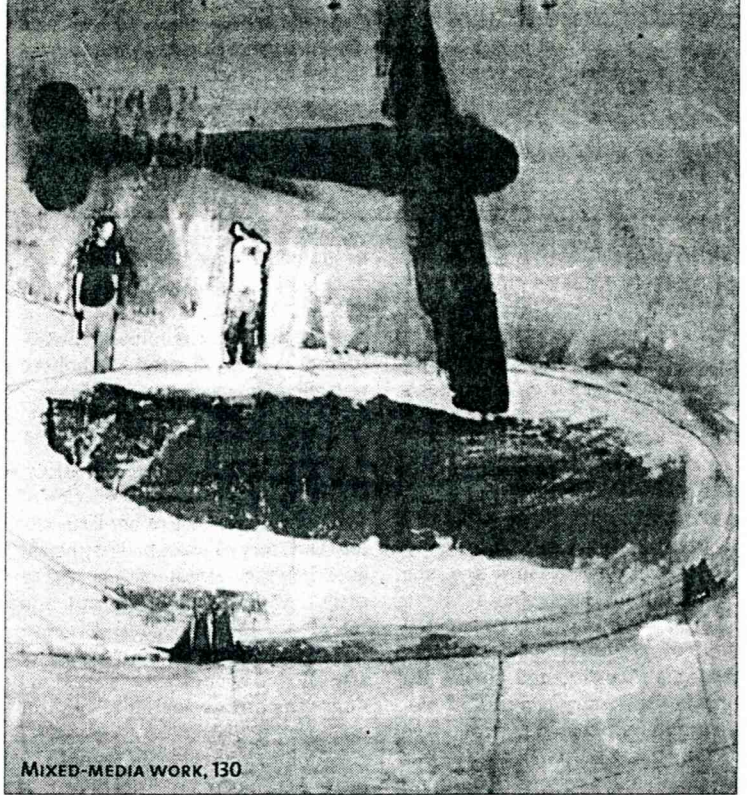


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MIXED-MEDIA WORK, 130

Double dynamic

The Griffin brothers reinvent their own mythical art world **By DEIRDRE HANNA**

SET UP: CLINT GRIFFIN AND SCOTT GRIFFIN on view at the V.

MacDonnell Gallery (1340 Queen West) until December 30 (by appointment after December 18). 534-3259. Rating: **NNNN**

BACK IN THE MID-90S, WHEN BROTHERS Clint and Scott Griffin dropped their collaborative art practice to pursue a pair of solo careers, it probably felt like they were growing up.

After all, their work as artists evolved out of the elaborate "set-ups" they'd been constructing together, using action figures and assorted paraphernalia salvaged from their family's southern Ontario farm, since they were kids.

But the freshness and power of their latest fraternal effort proves that working together, the Griffin brothers are bigger than the sum of their parts.

Still working with salvage, the Griffins produce large mixed-media collages on wooden panels, using found photographs, wax-based encaustic paints, ballpoint pen, pencil and some other stuff. Gouged passages in the plywood boards evoke London, Ontario, great Paterson Ewen, while the muted, putty-black-and-red palette and visceral yet restrained forms

recall Montreal giant Betty Goodwin. There's also a distinct Italian Arte Povera influence, but while the Griffins cite some highly quote-worthy sources, their work in no way feels derivative.

Works like Highway Piece, a huge, three-panel portrait of a highway exit ramp that sizzles with repressed energy and uses a bare minimum of marks, and Thirty Thousand Plus Cargo, which depicts a laker barge and its crew of two floating in a weirdly drained space, pack a loaded narrative into formally satisfying images that will grow with time.

The two sculptures – the angst-ridden Snorkler and Snowblower, a piece made with actual salvaged skidoo parts that spans most of the length of the gallery's floor – are less exquisitely subtle but still deeply thought-provoking.

The Griffins' division of labour goes back to their play days. Clint does the people, while Scott, the elder by just over a year, does the planes, boats and other vehicles. In the context of that time frame, the 20-something Griffin brothers have been producing work for longer than many mid-career artists. The move back to their collaborative roots feels good.

••••• = Critics' Picks **NNNN** = This could change your life **NNNN** = Brain candy **NNN** = Solid, son

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