

Gillanders's 'Blind Spot' challenges perspective

► Stephanie Bento

Perception is not only about what you see but what you don't see, according to artist David Gillanders, whose exhibition *Blind Spot* is currently at the McClure Gallery in the Visual Arts Centre on Victoria Avenue.

"I think perception is limited because there is a lot more there than we are focusing on or that we are aware of," said Gillanders. "If some of the paintings look like something but you're not quite sure, and the closer you go, the less you can figure it out, that's what it is about. You can see things, but not in their complete forms."

Blind Spot portrays the limits of perception by using elements of size and distance to mimic the way we often overlook certain realities in our world. In this context, a blind spot is interpreted as an element placed outside of one's range of perception, causing certain things to go unseen.

As a starting point, the artist was inspired by beautiful landscapes of trees and sky. He presented two conflicting canvas sizes to show different points-of-view of one same element—nature. This provided several versions of one reality.

"They are not so much painted from memory as they are painted as memories," he said. "Vague, incomplete, at times reduced to small detail, sometimes parts are missed up, overlapped, not quite correctly arranged. There is something there, but there is always something missing."

Gillanders was born in Toronto, but he lives and works in Montreal. His previous work has been exhibited in various galleries, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Last year, two of his works were acquired by the collection *prêts d'oeuvres d'art, musée national des beaux-arts du Québec*.

His current 8' x 10' oil paintings entitled *Thoughts of Poland* illustrate clearly defined landscapes, while larger 42' x 60' paintings are abstract and gloomy, with mysterious shapes and softly nuanced colors.



Visitors ponder David Gillanders's work at the McClure Gallery.

Photo: Stephanie Bento

"Smaller pictures have a larger view because it's like a lens looking at a vast landscape," said Gillanders. "In the bigger paintings, it's as if the zoom is bigger so you are looking at it much closer and it's filling up your perception."

Gillanders said that his intention for using two contrasting canvas sizes was to depict the way distance can affect perception. Smaller images present a more detailed depth of field of an identifiable landscape while larger images imitate an extreme close-up. A blind spot is defined as something that you don't see and that's what his larger paintings illustrate.

"If you take something that's clearly

defined and you put it right up close to you, it creates a big view in your eyes and you can't see it," said Gillanders as he interpreted his abstract paintings and drawings.

At first glance, his large paintings seem vague and empty, but a longer gaze allows viewers to discern subtle nuances within the dark and lighter tones of the image.

"The longer you look at it, the more you see in it," said visitor Vera Bondy, who currently takes art courses at the Visual Art Centre. "It's very interesting to see the larger paintings that have defused outlines, and then have the smaller ones that are more hard-edged landscape."

Gallery visitor Amanda Kelly was per-

plexed at how the artist utilized oil paint to shape hard-edged structures in his work. She also pinpointed the dual relationship between distance and perception in his paintings. "When you are looking at them and you step back, you have the sense of when you look out the window when you're driving," she said, commenting on the duality of perception and distance.

"You start to feel queasy. He captured it in a really interesting way."

• *Blind Spot*, an exhibition by David Gillanders, remains at the McClure Gallery, 350 Victoria Ave., through Jan. 27. Info: 514-488-9558.