

The painting 30-10-04 Highway 69 exemplifies Monica Tap's robust and seemingly careless rapidity of brush stroke.



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Well, presumably, it would begin in stillness (being a painting, after all, and not a film) and go on to embody movement. Yes, but how? Well, by a kind of stuttering placement of objects (a tree is here, over at the right, but because the landscape is speeding by, it's also over here at the left). And by a robust and even careless (or seemingly careless) rapidity of brush stroke. In the painting called *30-10-04 Highway 69*, for example, the foreground is nothing but an undifferentiated, inarticulate, horizontal smear or wipe of pigment, back-boarded by an imprecisely rendered stand of forest, more in focus than the foreground because, optically speaking, it's not moving as fast.

Can painting deal with time-based media? It's the big question right now for Monica Tap. And it's a tough one to resolve satisfactorily. The Futurists and the Cubists tried it early in the last century and came up with something else instead. Still photographers tried it and mostly decided time was better left to the movies. Even the Impressionists tried it — think of Monet's sequential attempts to track the movement of the light across the facade of Rouen Cathedral.

So it's a question worth the asking. And Tap's attempts to explore it are admirable. In the best of these new time-based, film-based landscapes, you do get the rush and tumble of things, the feeling of time before and time after. When they're not working so well — and sometimes they're not — the results are too pretty. So pretty, you can't blame the viewer for hunkering down before them for some serious emoting.

Monica Tap's paintings are at the Wynick/Tuck Gallery until June 4.

Motion pictures

VISUAL ARTS

Gary Michael Dault

One sure way to irritate the normally unflappable Monica Tap is to stand in front of her new paintings and emote about the way she has incarnated the landscape, captured the changing light and rustle of flickering leaves, and harnessed the balmy winds to her busy brush.

"Nonsense," the no-nonsense Tap would respond to your raptures, pointing out that her new paintings, now at the Wynick/Tuck Gallery, are not remotely about that kind of thing. "Even their colour is anti-naturalistic," she says. "I chose a palette deliberately designed not to evoke the colours of the landscape. The colours I used are all from found sources — like candy wrappers."

Her work has changed a lot in the last five years. Or, more accurately, it has evolved — a word I'm sure she would prefer. The paintings she was making a couple of

ous works — as sensuous as the current paintings — but grounded, for all their hedonistic grandeur, in a powerful, conceptually clear method.

They began life as drawings by Old Masters — Leonardo and Van Gogh (of whom she has made an extensive study) were favourites — which she would project, sometimes upside down, onto her raw canvases. Then, in the course of working up the pictures, which were frequently painted in the beautiful soft creams and greys that evoked the presence of the originals, the images of the venerable drawings would gradually get lost, occluded by Tap's scumbling and layering of the pigment, until there was nothing left of them, really, but a kind of art-historical fragrance that lingered in each picture.

"Those paintings were informed by landscape drawings, some of them 300 years old," Tap notes. You couldn't see them any more, but you could more or less feel their authoritative presence.

But now, as she puts it, she has "come to the end of drawing-based work." What the new paintings offer, according to Tap, is "a new

more all-over, uncomposed look) and, most markedly, "a different response to time."

"What would happen," she asked herself, "if I decided not to deal with such a huge tract of time any more in the paintings [like the hundreds of years encapsulated in her source drawings]? What would happen if I tried to make a painting of 30 seconds?"

What happened is these new landscapes. Instead of drawing on, well, drawing, as a source, Tap has turned to video — or, more accurately, to the tiny 30-second digital movie you can take with your digital camera.

"I'd use up the 30 seconds filming from airplane windows, from trains [she loves the headlong sweep of landscape past a train window], from a car," she tells me. Then, sifting through her collection of 30-second clips, most of which were of countryside rushing by, she'd pick three stills from one of them and proceed to paint her new "landscape" paintings (the quotation marks denoting the tentativeness with which she approaches the landscape idea) using each of the three stills as single layer of the painting. "If a painting