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Adjustment to city life inspires art

Alienation a theme in Korderas's work

By ELISSA BARNARD Arts Reporter
Thu. Apr 29 - 4:54 AM



The Masquerade by Jessica Korderas is on exhibit this week in her sold-out solo show at Gallery Page and Strange, 1869 Granville St., Halifax. (Peter Parsons / Staff)



Living in a city for the first time, artist Jessica Korderas turned a painful feeling of alienation into exquisite miniature worlds, peopled by lovers, partiers and one outsider.

She grew up in Napanee, Ont., which has a population of 5,000, and went to Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B., "which has even fewer people."

When she moved to a downtown apartment building in Halifax; "it was the most populated area I've lived in — people all the time — but you don't talk or interact with anybody at all in a real way.

"It was a lot harder than I thought to get settled in the city."

In her transparent, acrylic resin blocks she builds up layer upon layer of liquid plastic with tiny drawings on Mylar for highly detailed dramas that are romantic and haunting.

The Park, based on a 1950s photograph in Rome, depicts two lovers on the grass, while a man wearing an overcoat is the outsider walking past them and a group of pigeons.

The alienated individual in The Masquerade, a crowded two-floor party scene with people in animal headdresses, is one unmasked woman. Her face is only visible as a reflection in a tiny mirror she holds.

Korderas releases some of her inner demons in a macabre and enchanting New York apartment building seen from the front and the back, with different dramas in each apartment of the five-storey brownstone. "I wasn't going for realism so I could be broader and it allowed me to explore darker themes as well."

In one room, there is a washer and dryer with a tiny hand visible as it hangs outside the barely open dryer door. This image has its roots in a horrifying news story Korderas read years ago in Ontario. A couple had killed their three small children and put their bodies in the washer and dryer. "It was such a disgusting, grotesque image. It gave me nightmares and stuck with me for years."

In the upper flat there is a little girl with a large hyena and on the first floor a man in a suit is butchering a cow in his kitchen, an image that is inspired by a Francis Bacon painting.

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A deer trapped inside one apartment connects to the aridness of city life.

"That was a hard adjustment in the city — the lack of wilderness and nature."

The artist's imagery is inspired by film, including the Fellini movies she watched as she did this series, by art and by different time periods. However, she wants people to "take their own thing from them."

Interested in glass as a young art student, she discovered this labour-intensive medium at Mount Allison from a visiting artist.

Her detail is amazing. For the festooning foliage in The Park she cut out each miniscule leaf and used real sand for the path. In The Pub she draws the entire face of a rear building that is obscured by the pub.

"It makes you want to see more. Even that frustration I think adds to it.

"What I like about the resin, too, is you can't get in there. You can't affect these things. They're stuck and you can't enter the place."

(ebarnard@herald.ca)

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