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## Cossey sees ships up close, Mansel looks underwater

By ELISSA BARNARD Arts Reporter  
Sun, Mar 13 - 4:53 AM



Net Rigging by Shelley Mansel is in the Halifax artist's exhibit Relics, paintings of underwater scenes and objects, at Gallery Page and Strange, 1869 Granville St., Halifax to March 25.



KEITH COSSEY twins his passions for sailing and photography in his first solo show at ViewPoint Gallery.

A Short View of Tall Ships, on exhibit to April 3, is a close-up look at the rigging, pulleys, ropes and sails of tall ships.

"There are so many images of tall ships, the length of them and in full sail, and I wanted to look at the specifics in more details," says Cossey.

He exhibits just one picture of the crowds on the waterfront during a Tall Ships festival and then leaves the noise and chaos behind for quiet, alluring images of neglected beauty.

He opens up a new world to the viewer in the majesty of perfectly coiled rope, the blurred fling of a jib's sheet whipping through the air during a tack and in men's hands, the golden hairs visible on tanned skin, working at ropes and winches in the Caribbean.

In the repetition of heavy ropes and blocks, in what Cossey calls "the weave of ropes and spars," and in the iron or wooden hoops holding a sail to a thick wooden mast, he loves "the colours, the textures and the lines more from an abstract composition."

"I appreciate the workmanship, craftsmanship, that went into the tall ships, and this exhibit is contrasting the new and old."

Cossey shot the familiar golden eagle from the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Eagle at a tilt to get a different view.

"It's the view you get if you go in a small boat and go under the bow sprit. It looks like it's taking off."

Cossey first sailed in Shediac Bay in 1980, when he lived in Moncton. When he moved to Halifax, he crewed on a 40-foot sailboat. He later owned a 16-foot boat and sailed with his kids "in and out of the bays and inlets of the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia and in the Bras d'Or Lakes."

"I've been attracted to the sea for a long time. My uncle was a navigator aboard a

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mercant snip in and after the war. He had great stories about that."

The images in A Short View of Tall Ships come from wandering around with his camera on the Halifax waterfront when the ships are visiting and from a trip he and his wife took in the British Virgin Islands aboard a three-masted schooner, the Arabella.

The picture Arabella Skipper and Mate features an intense look between the male skipper and female mate as the schooner is at full sail in brilliant sunshine.

"He had just been whipped by one of the ropes," Cossey said.

Light is a big part of Cossey's images, the sunlight coming through the Arabella's crisp white sails, and the way light glows on a pile of honey-coloured wooden pulleys at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

Cossey travels the province as Nova Scotia regional advisor for the Rural and Co-operatives Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

"That's my day job, but photography is my passion. I see it as a creative and artistic outlet."

He graduated last year from the New York Institute of Photography after taking a distance education course and received an award of merit for a photograph taken at night at the Armdale roundabout.

Cossey has found many exceptional images just walking through the Public Gardens and Point Pleasant Park.

"I love doing that type of photography."

He doesn't plan out an image.

"Most of the time it's serendipitous. There's a form of contemplative photography called Miksang, a Buddhist approach, and they have a term called flash perception. You're taking what grabs your attention, your first thought.

"I'm mainly a landscape and street photographer. I go for form and texture and colour."

Cossey has been a member of the ViewPoint photography co-operative gallery for a year and this is his first solo show. He is working toward a ViewPoint group exhibit in October on flamenco dance, curated by Holly Crooks.

Cossey gives a talk today at 2 p.m. The gallery, at 1272 Barrington St., is open Wednesday to Sunday, noon to 5 p.m., or by appointment.

The gallery also has on view for a selection of original Paul Strand prints including one of Alfred Stieglitz. John Walker's documentary about Stieglitz, the modernist photographer, called Strand Under the Dark Cloth, will be shown Friday at 8 p.m., (\$6) at Carbon Arc, Khyber Building.

SHELLEY MANSEL takes you down into the depths in her latest series of paintings, called Relics, at Gallery Page and Strange to March 25.

In gorgeous shadowy spaces of deep blues and greens, she depicts objects on the ocean floor from rotting hulls of ships to nets with gaping holes to an entire pickup truck.

These worlds are both imaginary and real, the pile of tires in greens on the floor in Tired Reef both ghostly and environmentally scary, the old Remington-style typewriter in the water more nostalgic and eerie.

Imbued with meaning and a haunting, mysterious quality, the paintings are also visually intense in terms of Mansel's use of light, colour and pattern.

She keeps it simple, dramatic and focused in austere spaces in lush blues and greens and purples. These pictures are not teeming in schools of fish or plant life. Instead, in White Coral, there is one iconic sprig of turquoise-tinged coral rising out of a deep olive-coloured mound. In Float Free, a ball of purple net sits under a coil of green rope getting ready to work its way loose.

Two paintings are a departure. The surface of the painting Portside Berth is textured and raised, crackled a bit, and the painting is more abstract in its corners and areas of colours.

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Mansel has painted a net of circles over an eerie picture of an old plane intact on the bottom of the ocean floor, like Amelia Earhart's lost plane. This net-like filter looks like it's about to dissolve or burn up, it's so fragile looking, as is the darkened plane.

Mansel's last exhibit, Urban Cathedrals, featured the contemporary, constructed landscape of empty offices, warehouses and parking garages as well as highrise buildings under construction.

This is an equally brooding and atmospheric show, marked by a masterful use of colour and light and teetering between life and death.

"When I began this body of work, the word 'relic' was emblematic of the subject I wanted to paint — a wreck, decayed and derelict, in a paradoxical state of strength and fragility as it succumbs to its environment" she says. "The bottom of the sea is an ideal landscape to portray the expeditious decay of these ghostlike relics.

"A relic, by definition, can be an artifact or historical object (to be commemorated) or it can be a remnant or remains (to be discarded). These paintings employ the dual concept of 'relic' to emphasize the structure as a monument in beauty and in peril, suspended in a tenuous state of perseverance and impermanence."

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