

The Wright stuff

In the running for a national award, Waterloo artist also has three exhibitions on the go

By ROBERT REID
RECORD STAFF

It's been a good couple of months for Andrew Wright.

The Waterloo artist, who among other achievements was the founding artistic director of the Contemporary Art Forum/Kitchener & Area, is a semi-finalist for a national arts award.

Wright is one of 25 artists from across Canada to make the long list of semi-finalists for the \$50,000 Sobeys Art Award. The list will be cut to five finalists in a couple of weeks.

Wright says he was "elated" when he received the news.

"The field is pretty strong," he acknowledges. "I'm getting congratulatory e-mails from all over the country. It's very gratifying."

The Sobeys Art Foundation created the most lucrative award for a Canadian artist under the age of 40 in 2002. Originally given every two years, the award is now given annually to an artist who has exhibited in a public or commercial gallery within 18 months of being nominated.

The recipient of numerous awards and honours, Wright has been nominated for the Sobeys Award twice previously, in 2003 and 2005. But this is the first time he has been a semi-finalist.

"It's a privilege to be included in the long list of other artists who I admire from across the country."

As fate would have it, he has three exhibitions of "vastly different work" currently on view — all within an hour's drive from his Waterloo home.

"It's an incredible coincidence that these shows have happened at the same time," he affirms. "It has made for a very busy spring."

His show at the Peak Gallery, which represents the lens-based, multimedia artist in Toronto, continues through May 27.

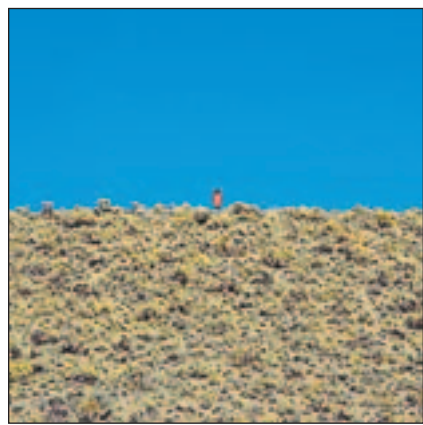
More philosophically, Wright adds: "Being a visual artist is an invisible profession. You work for long periods alone and there are few opportunities to show your work or receive feedback from other artists and the community at large."

He also is one of four artists included in Images & Apparatus, an exhibition of contemporary photography at Museum London through June 10.

Finally, he is one of two artists comprising Passages at Cambridge Galleries. He joins Toronto artist Lisa Klapstock in the exhibition of recent photography and video, which continues through June 30.

PASSAGES

Photographers have documented the landscape since the early days of the development of the technology in



Kamloops by Lisa Klapstock.

HANDOUT



Andrew Wright of Waterloo is a semi-finalist for the \$50,000 Sobeys Art Award. He currently has work displayed in three shows, including Passages, an exhibition of photography and video with Toronto artist Lisa Klapstock, at the Cambridge Galleries.

PETER LEE, RECORD STAFF

EXHIBITION

Passages

- Andrew Wright and Lisa Klapstock
- Cambridge Galleries, Queen's Square
- On view through June 30
- Phone 519-621-0460 for information and gallery hours

the 19th century.

Some of the 20th century's most identifiable images combined landscape and photography. Ansel Adams is one of a number of prominent photographers who come to mind.

Two of the best known Canadian photographers of the last half century — Freeman Patterson and Courtney Milne — photograph the landscape almost exclusively.

In Passages, Wright and Klapstock use photography in new ways to examine landscape, especially the ways in which we perceive landscape, both natural and manufactured.

SKIES/ROCKET LAUNCH

Skies consists of seven large-scale photographic prints. The prints are not so much black and white studies as visual tone poems in the key of grey — simultaneously banal and sublime.

The images are more interesting conceptually than esthetically.

Wright transformed his garage studio into a massive pinhole camera through which to document clouds as they traverse the skies above his home.

Wright continues his ongoing investigation of the nature of perception as it relates to landscape in Untitled Rocket Launch.

Again, methodology rules.

Wright mounted a digital camera on a small rocket which he then launched from RIM Park in Waterloo and from a farm near Listowel.

The video records both the audio of the rocket and a spiralling aerial view of the landscape as the rocket takes flight.

AMBIGUOUS LANDSCAPES

English visionary poet William Blake once declared that Nature without Man is barren.

It's an observation Klapstock seems to have taken to heart.

In Ambiguous Landscapes, Klapstock subtly implicates herself in large coloured photographic prints and accompanying videos of landscapes that are both rigorously minimalist and formal.

In Kamloops, a tiny figure of the artist wearing a red coat is perched on the horizon line of what appears to be a formidably bleak landscape. The image was actually made in the vicinity of her hometown, Kamloops, B.C.

At first glance, Helsinki looks like an image of a wall of stone bricks. But it's actually massive steps that the artist is recorded climbing in the accompanying video.

Klapstock reminds us that our perception of landscape is shaped by artistic depictions mediated through the technologies and methodologies employed in documenting landscape.

Nature without Man — or Woman — is indeed barren.

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Parker Posey mirrors our most ludicrous selves

By ELLEN MCCARTHY

There it is, 15 minutes in, the Parker Posey money shot. She's in a tub, the camera's cockeyed. A pack of cigs and a fat glass of wine lie by her side as she winds up the crank on an old-timey viewfinder, flipping through still shots of an orgy. She's exasperated, ridiculous.

You are mesmerized.

Because that's what she does, our singing, dancing queen of the indies. She makes the absurd entrancing. She charms by holding up a hand mirror and flashing back visions of our most ludicrous selves. The Jackie O worshipper seducing her brother. The frigid, braces-wearing yuppie violently castigating a pet store clerk. The meanest mean girl humiliating high school newbies with whipped cream and a bullhorn.

Fay Grim, Posey's woman in the tub and the lead character in the film of the same name, is a beleaguered single mom who carries the same sack of groceries around for the first five scenes of the movie and winds up traipsing across the globe looking for her runaway husband and getting sucked into international espionage. Of course she does; it's an art-house comedy. And a Parker Posey flick.

Here, listen to how Posey once ended an interview with National Public Radio: "Thank you. I hope I made sense."

Posey has shot a manic 50-odd movies in the past 15 years and in the process trademarked such a singular brand of erratic quirkiness that she has become an adjective. ("That's a Parker Posey role." "We're looking for a Parker Posey type.")

She stutters in response to an inquiry about the plot of Broken English, her second movie of the summer, due out in June. (For the record, it's about a hotel manager in New York struggling with relationship issues.) Posey sounds as if she has just spun around 10 times and landed in a giggling heap on the ground. Which is maybe how she feels, having just gotten off a plane in Los Angeles and trying to squeeze in a quick phone interview during the drive to CNN's studios, fulfilling her obligation to promote a movie that won't be seen in major megaplexes and won't have the benefit of a prime-time ad campaign.

It's a familiar drill along the path she has chosen. Or the one that has chosen her. This life as indie royalty wasn't something Posey plotted long in advance. The daughter of a car dealer dad and chef mom in Mississippi, she fell into acting after being rejected from the ballet program of a prestigious arts academy. It clicked, and she went on to the drama school at a state university outside New York City. Her first gig was on the daytime soap "As the World Turns."

But in the meantime, the independent-film scene in New York was booming. So it was the work she got, doing readings, showing up for auditions, making friends with folks like Hal Hartley, who directed "Fay Grim" and its predecessor, 1997's "Henry Fool."

Anyway, something worked between Posey and these low-budget, literary films.

"I think that's what happens with a lot of people. You attract it or it attracts you. And it fits," she says. "I think people probably think I self-start, but I don't. ... I'm an actor, and I like to be of use to the director. To be a muse."

Then she's off down a rabbit hole, chatting about self-starters and power and how people who have lots of it don't necessarily have to find what they're best suited for because probably they can make any career they want work for them. And she's sort of making sense. Even when she talks in loopy figure eights, it's lyrical and articulate, a private soliloquy of the sort you imagine must run through her mind night and day.

The actress has, in the past, described herself as narcissistic, obnoxious, self-absorbed. She has coped with losing parts because she mocked the audition process. That's probably another reason she and indies seem to fit, temperamentally. She can be a muse to directors she respects, and they can give her the leeway — without eight

levels of studio approval — to do what she will with the part.

"I've known Hal for, like, 15 years. He's such an artist: He's visual, he's musical. He writes women in a really great way," she says. "It's almost like a graphic novel. I loved it."

After years of rejecting television scripts (though stealing scenes with guest appearances on such shows as "Will & Grace" and "Boston Legal"), Posey signed on with the creators of "Gilmore Girls" to do a half-hour comedy about a book editor who tries to persuade her estranged younger sister to carry a child for her.

If the show gets picked up, Posey soon may have to deal with a lot more of a career side effect she doesn't enjoy: fame. She says she is mostly just happy for the work. The well-crafted characters, the liberating directors. "I'm lucky," she says. "I've had an interesting life so far."

So what's next? What hasn't she done that she'd like to do?

"I guess I'd like to, uh, I don't know what. I was gonna come up with something funny, but . . ." she stops, trailing off into a sigh as the car door opens and another interview awaits.

It's OK. She's tired. And probably dizzy. And she'll figure it out. And when she does, we'll all stop to laugh at our ridiculous reflection.

• Washington Post



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Parker Posey has made about 50 movies and, in the process, has trademarked a singular brand of erratic quirkiness.