

Gerard Choy

Frances Dorsey

Peter Dykhuis

Lech Garnett

Drew Klassen

Susan McEachern

Ivan Murphy

Wilma Needham

Gerri Nolan-Hilfiker

ROOTS AND SHOOTS

contemporary art in halifax

Dan O'Neill

Ariella Pohlke

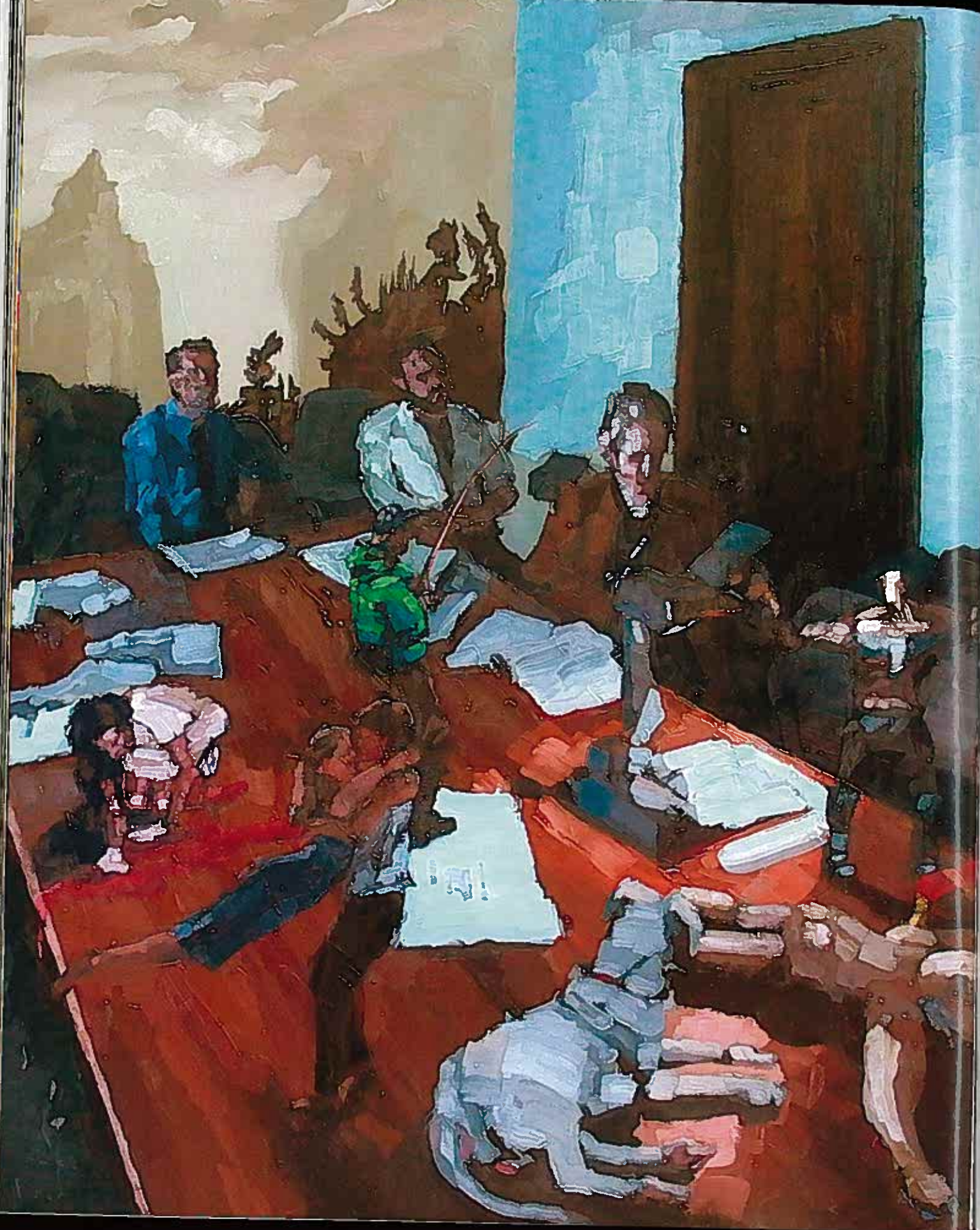
Jan Peacock

Mathew Reicheiz

Joyce Saunders &
Kathleen Teilock

Gary Wilson

Robert Zingone



Roots and Shoots: Contemporary Art in Halifax, published by MSVU Art Gallery, Halifax (Nova Scotia) 2006.

MATHEW REICHERTZ

Untitled No. 44 (Tiny Town series), 2006



The *Tiny Town* paintings by Mathew Reichertz are submerged in melancholy; they represent both a fear and a longing. *Untitled #44* gives us a dismal depiction of modern life – it is 1:30 and men and women sit around a large conference table, at work. They are bracketed with two alternative realities. From behind they are dwarfed by a majestic mountain landscape (a sublime landscape?). Perhaps this represents how far they have traveled from notions of a utopian existence. On the other side, confronting them from the front, are small figures assuming a variety of postures that suggest alternative states of being—comfort, pleasure, delight, power, and exploration—all in miniaturized form and out of reach, just slipping out of consciousness. In the centre, the men and women look bored, preoccupied, and complaisant.

Narrative has been a consistent occupying force of Reichertz's paintings—the human narrative of moral dilemma, the desire to find meaning and structure in the everyday. In past projects it has been possible to engage with narrative more comfortably, with a series of paintings that more gradually and gently introduce the story amidst the grandeur of paint, the surface, the field. *Tiny Town* begins to break down that comfort by condensing the narrative through the use of multiple picture planes forcing the various stages of the narrative to be simultaneously experienced, the fantastical and the mundane. Is the mountain landscape on the back wall a tacky wallpaper reproduction from a saloon on the western prairies, or is it a representation of our lost dream of communion with the natural world? Do the foreground figures delight us with fanciful play, or do they threaten to reveal the imposter behind the appearance of adult competence?

– SUSAN MCEACHERN

SUSAN MCEACHERN
Herbivores, 2006



The connection I see between my work and Susan's is one of attitude. We both use our work as a way of thinking about our environment. Her thought process is complex, multilayered and often humorous. Photography in Susan's case is a tool of engagement, guided by an urge to frame or isolate something so it can be further considered. Juxtapositions then begin to suggest themselves, often taking the form of text and linear diagrams designed to propose metaphorical relationships. In recent years Susan's research has been devoted to the dynamics of communication that exists in various communities around her.

Herbivores is the beginning of a larger series devoted to dressage. In it we are presented with six images of horses grazing. Only the necks and the heads of the horses are pictured, entering the frame from the top left. The horses are doing what they would do most of the time if they had it their way. Only the practiced prodding and attention of their riders rein in their urge to munch and chomp. The text inside the frame and the diagram on the glass comes from the list of required movements in a dressage competition, specific choreographed movements designed to test the level of communication between horse and rider.

The dressage community is one that involves entire families but is most often focused around a comparatively tiny adolescent girl's relationship with a large and powerful animal. The activity is multifaceted, comprising extensive caregiving, expense and effort devoted to the attempted communication between very different beings. This attempt happens between back and bottom, flank and thigh, heels and ribs, hands and lips. The activity is sensual and physical in nature yet is standardized and ritualized by its traditional goals and curriculum. Through its study, Susan seeks to deepen her understanding of human communication in general.

— MATHEW REICHERTZ