

**RBC
CANADIAN
PAINTING
COMPETITION
TEN
YEARS**

For his series entitled *Tiny Town* **Mathew Reichertz** collected source images from the internet, with the intention of combining them into believable pictorial spaces. Working intuitively, he combined images he has collected using his day-to-day experience as a guide.

I may have a disturbing encounter with someone during the day, as I ponder the images that I have collected, a particular combination may begin to feel like the disturbing experience that I had earlier.

The work becomes a representation of the artist's quotidian experience—although the final paintings or drawings don't actually resemble anything or anyone he knows.

Reichertz received an MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and a BFA with distinction from Concordia University in Montreal. He has exhibited widely across Canada, as well as in Korea and was shortlisted for the 2006 Sobey Art Award.



#16 from the series *Tiny Town*, 2005, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches

Fionnuala Reynolds is a graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. With a focus on oil painting, Reynolds explores a variety of techniques and media, and is driven by a desire to translate aspects of her surroundings into paint. Her motivation comes from a passion to communicate strong, tactile and emotive sensations to the viewer.

Whether it is the vast depth of sky beyond the horizon, an unexpected combination of colour reflected in water, the moon's effect on passing clouds or the way light is transmitted through branches and leaves, I feel compelled to translate these moments into paint while attempting to convey my own emotional response.

Reynold's practice has expanded in recent years to the production of public murals, both in Canada and in England. She lives and works in Halifax.



Sky Three, 2000, oil on canvas, 48 x 30 inches

MATHEW REICHERTZ IN CONVERSATION WITH SHAUNA McCABE

Shauna McCabe: Storytelling seems to provide the structure, the scaffolding, for your work. What has influenced how you approach narrative and how you tell one visually?

Mathew Reichertz: I have always thought through narrative, but I have tried to go further in understanding why. I'm interested in Lyotard's ideas about small narratives and Arthur Danto's notion of embodied meaning as a way of thinking about formal and material choices as they relate to subject matter. Often I have tried to allow the story to drive the formal decisions I make. I've also sought out concepts from phenomenology and the science of sight as a mirror that remind me of my own subjectivity.

SM: You work with fragmented impressions, transposing them into critical frameworks for your work. For example, a dream of a conflict with a friend led to the 2007 series *The Fight*, which you staged and layered with details on a blue screen, mapping out seven composite tableaux. How does the filtering process take place?

MR: I try to understand my practice through my environment. For example, I realized something about what I was trying to do in *The Fight* when I saw a scene in *The Matrix Reloaded* where Neo first confronts the multiple Mr. Smiths. The fight scene escalates with more and more Smiths materializing and Neo having to do crazier and crazier things to fight them—very violent, but choreographed and beautiful. I also watched *Ultimate Fighting* videos, much less pretty than movie fights. As the combatants grappled for long periods of time, I found myself waiting for similar beautiful moments.

SM: What about the series *Tiny Town* in which individual images seem much more disparate, as opposed to being based on one larger story?

MR: *Tiny Town* is related closely to the portraits I am doing now. The experiences I was drawing on were small dramas: my witnessing a person feeling uncomfortable or feeling sorry for my dog because she cut her foot in the park. I was searching for an equivalence of feeling, not fact.

SM: It strikes me that throughout your work there is a search for another equivalence, of time. It gives the paintings a subtle intertextuality, connecting them to each other, to other representations, and to the bigger world. Do you think about building them in relationship to other forms of expression?

MR: Yes, for instance, the impetus for *The Fight* was filmic. I imagined a feature length movie that expanded one long fight scene, as little story as possible. Thinking about film made me reconsider how time can function visually, yet telling each story has as much to do with comics or early renaissance narrative strategies.

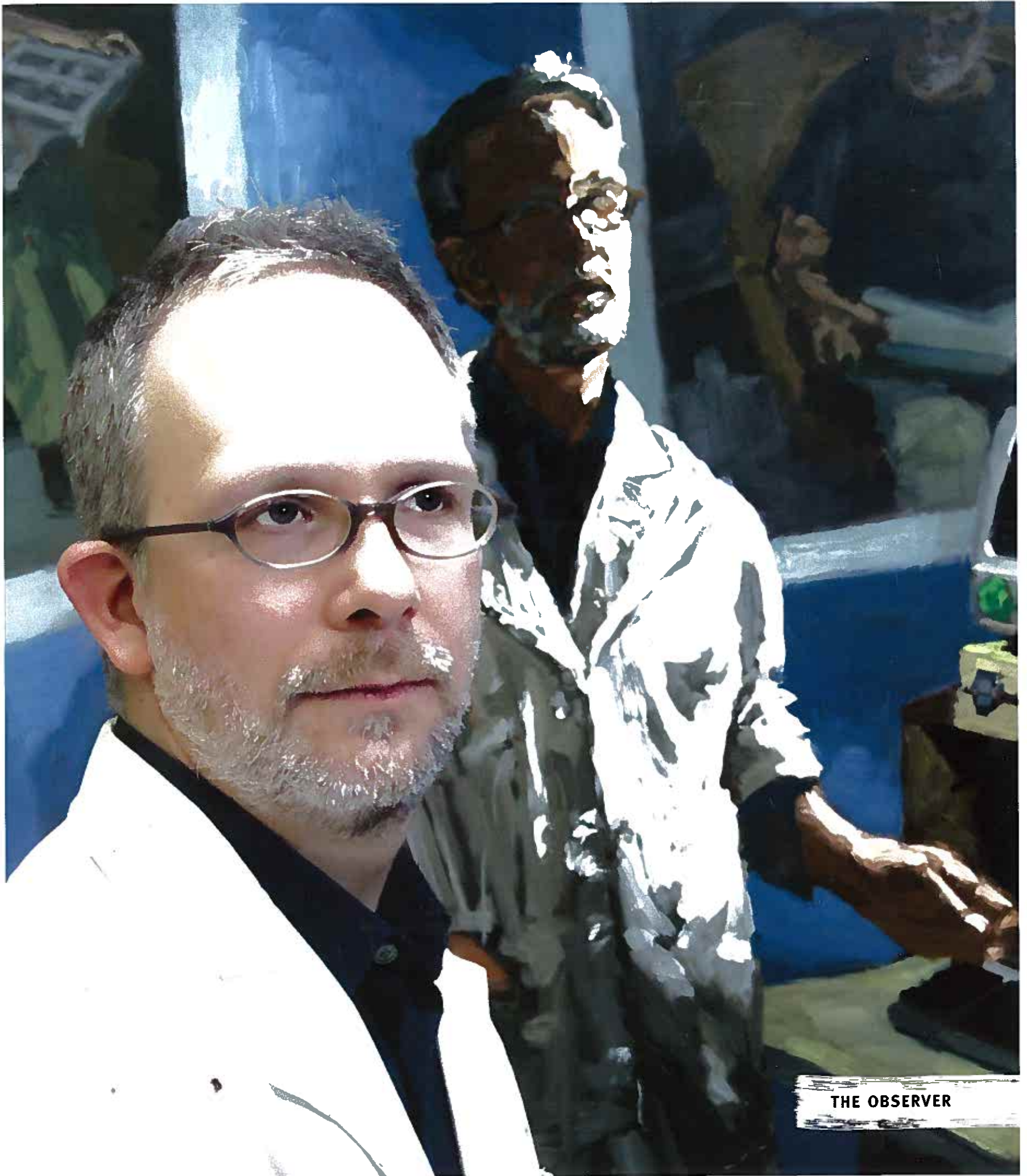
SM: Are biography and autobiography part of this thinking about time? You seem to be moving from depicting small dramas to thinking about their place in the consistency of a life.

MR: This shift is part of my recent experimenting with modes of representation that move away from a photographic source, to understand my actual visual experiences of the world. This has led to the project I am doing now, painting people from life. My interest in narrative is the backdrop for the decisions that go into representing someone.

SM: I want to go back to an idea you mentioned earlier, that of mirroring. In your work, what is 'out there' seems intimately tied to what is 'in here.' Mikhail Bakhtin suggested that "the self is a gift of the other"—is there an ethical impulse in how you approach this dialogue?

MR: Making work is connected to the world and implies an ethical position. It is what is apparent but goes unvoiced that interests me. My motivations have been cyclical, moving from an urge to memorialize, to an urge to make sense of specific traumatic events, to aimless experimentation. I constantly question my position, but my motivations come from a desire to be a good person. The way I engage with the world, through observation, comes from a basic place, but observation opens doors to self-reflection and empathy—they are linked.

SHAUNA McCABE is an Associate Professor at Mount Allison University where she is the Canada Research Chair in Critical Theory in the Interpretation of Culture.



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