

Graham Peacock Collage

Graham Peacock has been a significant figure on both the Edmonton and International art scene since he moved to Edmonton in 1969. Over the decades he has developed unique ways of drawing with paint; manipulated the forms of his canvases; formulated his own paint mediums; spear-headed the formation of important art groups and assisted in fostering a climate favorable to abstraction in Edmonton. Through his teaching at the University of Alberta he has also shaped the artistic visions of countless students.

The exhibition **Graham Peacock Collage** celebrates the vibrant and diverse career of this Edmonton-based artist; a career characterized by experimentation and a relentless search for ways to express Peacock's love of colour, form and the world around him. Inspired by and featuring the artist's painted collage works, a primary focus of this exhibition concerns Peacock's major commitment to abstraction.

While inspired by the artist's collage paintings, however, the exhibition **Graham Peacock Collage** also considers Peacock's studies in watercolour landscape painting. According to the artist...*Art reveals our spirit and humanity* and in pursuit of his aesthetic goals he places no limitations on the art styles he engages in, only questioning what...*the quality of the experience, as art, is*. Without narrowly defining his practice, Peacock moves freely between representation and abstraction, demonstrating that the only limitations to painting are to be found in the material of paint itself. Regardless of the style explored, Peacock's artwork reveals that paint can be a constant source of innovation, wonderment and pleasure. In this disclosure he also illustrates that artists need not be bound by only one approach or concern but rather can be collage works themselves, proficient in various modes of expression and engaged in a multitude of aesthetic challenges.

As related by curator Roger Boulet in the Edmonton Art Gallery catalogue Graham Peacock Paint, Process and Spirit (1988), Graham Peacock views art as

...a celebration of life, of creation, (and) an affirmation of the freedom and the boundless creativity of the human spirit.

The travelling exhibition **Graham Peacock Collage** explores this sense of freedom as it is expressed in the creative work of this senior Edmonton artist. Through this investigation the viewer is invited to encounter both *...boundless creativity...* and artistic perceptions which seek to inspire and uplift the spirit.

The exhibition **Graham Peacock Collage** was curated by Shane Golby and organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is supported by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present this travelling exhibition to venues throughout Alberta. Currently the Art Gallery of Alberta serves over 60 venues in approximately 35 communities. Exhibitions on tour from the Art Gallery of Alberta easily adapt to space requirements of smaller venues: schools, libraries, museums, health care centres and other community facilities. The exhibitions are organized in such a manner as to make unpacking, packing, hanging and shipping as easy as possible. Along with the exhibition, each venue receives an Educational Interpretive Guide. These materials enable teachers to use the exhibition within the school curriculum.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Collection is the primary source of works featured in the travelling exhibitions. Other sources for exhibitions may include community partners, archives, private collections and loans from artists. Each year we welcome new venues to enrich their community art through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program.

Our Thanks

The Artist:

Graham Peacock

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts

and to the many individuals, organizations and communities who contribute to the success of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program each year.

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FRONT COVER IMAGES:

Top: Graham Peacock, *Pompe I, Coliseum, Vico Equense, Italy*, 2006, Watercolour, On loan from the artist

Bottom Left: Graham Peacock, *Kris Cross Miniature #12*, 2014, Acrylic with canvas collage, On loan from the artist

Bottom Right: Graham Peacock, *Table Top Painting Miniature #19*, 2015, Painted canvas collage, On loan from the artist



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program

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Collage

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Graham Peacock
Suite 111, #72, 2011
Painted canvas collage
On loan from the artist

Graham Peacock's artistic career has been characterized by a sense of continual experimentation: a search for new ways to express his love of colour, form and the world around him. In this quest the artist places no limitations on the types of artistic practices he pursues and only questions what *...the quality of the experience, as art, is.*

One mode of artistic expression Peacock has experimented with is collage, a method of art making he began to experiment with in 1982. Collage served as an element in Peacock's paintings throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2011, however, he took this element and made it the primary subject of a new group of paintings. In this year he created a group of works entitled *Retrospective Painted Canvas Collage Miniatures*; a series of small collage paintings created by cutting up past canvases, some dating as far back as 1976, and attaching the cut strips to a new canvas backing. The colour, surface and drawing in the cut pieces suggested other colours which the artist painted alongside the collage strips to enhance the unity and spatial activity between the bands.

Peacock has continued such collage projects since 2011. As expressed by the artist, he will do a series of collages every so often as they are like studies: they are quick and a way for him to release creative energy and do something very immediate. As stated by Peacock:

I do them because I can and I like them.

The collages, however, are more than just 'fun and games'. For Peacock they are a means for him to explore colour palettes and serve as mementoes of experiences. As indicated by Peacock, his collage suites are often created after his travels to a place and the title and colours of the works are related to a sense of place and the colours and textures of the place he visited. As expressed by the artist:

Whether I am painting land or seascapes from observation or working 'abstractly' I am always responding via the sensations I receive from observation.



Graham Peacock
Oak Bay Marina, 1990
Watercolour on paper
On loan from the artist

The exhibition **Graham Peacock Collage** examines the career of senior Edmonton artist Graham Peacock. While primarily known for his bold abstract paintings, examples of which are prominently featured in this exhibition, this exhibition also features examples of Peacock's work in watercolour landscape painting. As expressed by the artist, though this aspect of his work is relatively unknown to the public, it is a practice he has pursued for many years and one not unrelated to his work in abstraction :

I have painted with watercolours since I was a child. My mother liked to paint and draw and I followed her interest. I would have my paint box and paper along on our holidays in the South of Devon, where I painted the cliffs and the sea in the late 1950's.

The activity dropped away when I attended art school and did not return until the 1980's. On vacations with young children, wanting to create during stays at Grandma's house on Bazan Bay on Vancouver Island, I returned to watercolour seascapes. Since then I have periodically made groups of work while traveling....

I taught a class in Watercolour for the University of Alberta in 2006/07 and 2008 in Vico Equense, in Southern Italy, and figurative work was always part of my instructional spectrum in the 42 years I taught painting and drawing as a professor at the U. of A. So in that way I have been continually involved in looking at and considering representational work.

Watercolour painting for me remains a vocation which, when I embrace it from time to time, I do so with the same degree of involvement as I do in my 'abstract' paintings. Responding directly to a motif of nature before me, or from that that I have experienced, as an inspirational source, both stimulate me to respond creatively. I am a naturalist, I am stimulated by the behavior of 'matter', be it a landscape or the topographic landscapes I create in pouring paint in my abstract painting process. They both involve the same painting principles.

I greatly admire the watercolour paintings of the English watercolour school, especially John Constable's skies and J.M. Turner's atmospheric land and seascapes.



Graham Peacock
Kris Cross Miniature #10, 2014
Acrylic with canvas collage
On loan from the artist

Though generally associated with Edmonton's abstract Formalist School of painters, in his work Graham Peacock embraces modes of expression which set his work apart from these other practitioners. One such method utilized or explored by the artist is collage. Collage is a technique of art production where the artwork is made from an assemblage of two dimensional forms to create a new whole. In essence, collage involves attaching two dimensional pieces of material from other sources onto a surface to create a new work.

While most of Graham Peacock's collage works have followed a linear, vertical format, in 2014 he began a new series of experimental collage works entitled the *Kris Cross Suite*. As expressed by the artist concerning these works:

The 'Kris Cross Collages' are, as the title suggests, based on a diagonal cross compositional theme and involves an under-over spatial play between the areas which is characteristically different than the vertical compositions found in the majority of my collages. This new freedom, if it really is that, rather offers different possibilities. The illusionistic geometry and colour of the shapes offers a more iconographic character than the neutrality of the vertical banding and is exciting to explore, although I see these collages leading me back to the under-painting and collage of my past and current paintings. Collage is an impasto demarcation for compositional drawing in my work, which appears in the all over crazed fields of paint with the bold colour showing through the crazed separation in the paint.

The colour and graphic character of these Kris Cross Collages recalls for me the boldness of the 1960s New York Colour Field School and the Canadian, Jack Brush, whose works I greatly admire.

Whether composed in a vertical or 'Kris Cross' format, and though appearing deceptively simple, Peacock's collage works are energetic and supremely satisfying creations. Combining careful consideration with 'impulsive' reactions, Peacock's collages draw the viewer both into and throughout the works and invite a prolonged mediation on the nature of painting and the actions of an artist.