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Dorian FitzGerald: Property of a Gentleman Toronto painter adds serious weight to vapid subject matter

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BY DAVID BALZER March 24, 2010 21:03

EDITORIAL RATING: To Apr 17, Wed-Sat, noon-6pm. Clint Roenisch Gallery, 944 Queen W. 416-516-8593. www.clintroenisch.com.

MOCCA — but makes a good impression here, with only three paintings and a print.

The reason for the sparseness isn't just the paintings' sizes (two at eight by six feet, one at nine by nine feet), but the time it takes to create them. According to FitzGerald's press release, he has slowly "refined" this process — which involves making acetate transfers onto canvas of digital images he finds, and then painting them in clear caulking and acrylic — only managing to produce about 15 works in this style. However impersonal and scientific (the release calls FitzGerald's technique "a kind of pointillism filtered into vector graphics," which is apt — it's hard to tell in reproduction if these images are actually painted), the result is impressively monumental. À la Chuck Close, an intimate view of the work reveals FitzGerald's segregated handling of colours, as if he's dealing in camouflage, and a step back turns this segregation into a monstrous whole.

There is, of course, a lack of feeling, a pop vapidity, here, which, in concert with FitzGerald's indifferent style, may seem disagreeable to some. The largest painting (pictured), of sunglasses, is illuminated by its title — Sir Elton John's Sunglasses, Woodside Estate, Old Windsor, England — thus prompting the mirthful response typical of any art that deals in the same subject matter as People magazine. FitzGerald says that he sees himself "as a contemporary court painter, documenting on a grand scale the material and spatial excesses of our time." But he doesn't have to be a social critic in order for his paintings to succeed. After all, part of the medium's job is to reproduce, and in doing so to decontextualize and analyze, notions of beauty; and FitzGerald's talent at doing this (so rare among contemporary artists) becomes its own, hypnotic form of provocation.

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