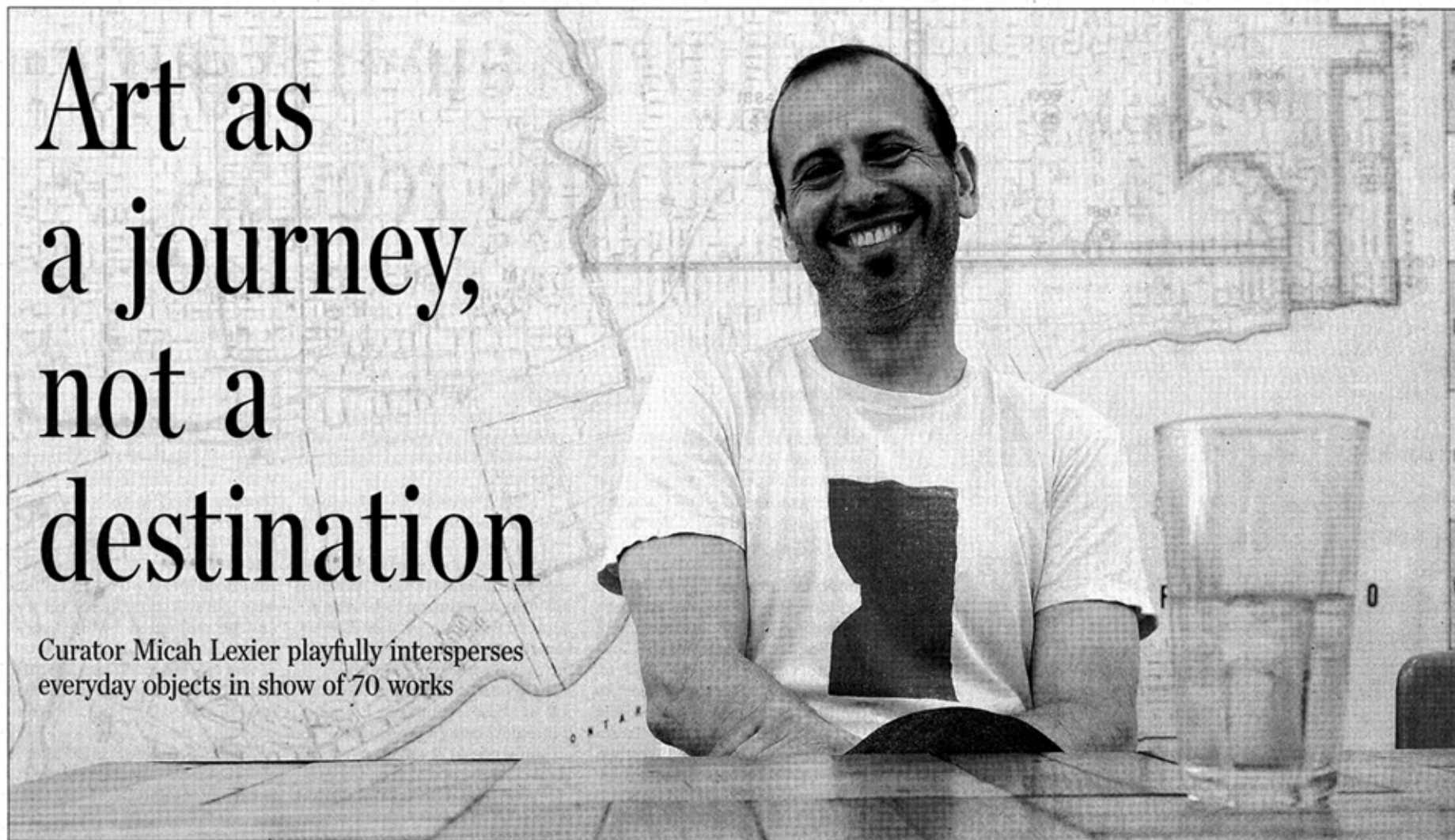


## WHAT'S ON

## GALLERIES

# Art as a journey, not a destination

Curator Micah Lexier playfully intersperses everyday objects in show of 70 works



KEITH BEATY / TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

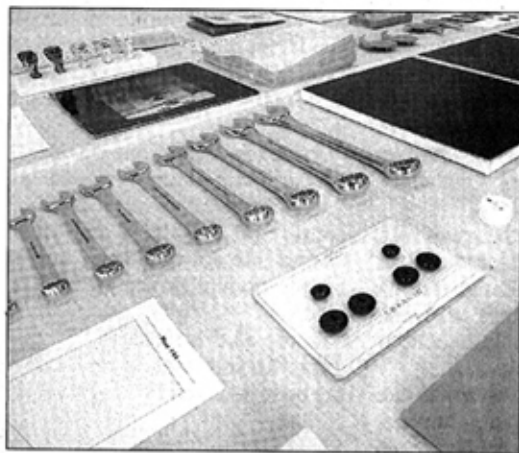
## MURRAY WHYTE VISUAL ART CRITIC

On the outside of MKG127 Gallery on Ossington Ave., the alphabet, from A through I, float in block white letters on a sky-blue background, wrapping around the storefront's façade. Around the last corner, the final two letters in the sequence leap out in bright yellow; it just so happens, though not really, that those letters spell "HI!"

To be clear, this isn't a work by Micah Lexier, who curated "A to B," of which the piece by Kay Rosen is part. The thing is, like everything else here, it very well could be, Lexier's remarkable conviviality having become a fixture on the Toronto art scene over the past few years.

The show is nothing less than a full expression of exactly that: 38 artists and 70 pieces, many of them borrowed across the often less-than-fluid boundaries of other galleries, cluster in large vitrines in the gallery. Here, Lexier calls in multiple favours, from well-known Toronto artists like Kelly Mark, Paul Butler, Spring Hurlbut, Jon Sasaki and Stephen Andrews, to name a few.

The fact that many of them are on loan from other galleries in the city speaks to Lexier's earnest, all-together-now spirit; few individuals, and certainly not enough institutions, have done as much to foster a sense of community in the art scene here, and his insistence that such boundaries not hinder its growth is remarkable all on its own. (For the



record, Lexier is himself on loan from the Birch Libralato Gallery, where his work is part of the current group show "Nota Bene.")

At MKG 127, Lexier intersperses the works, which range from young local artists with little profile to pieces from his own collection by such giants as Lawrence Weiner, with quirkily prosaic found objects: A pair of red-and-silver bar magnets, an old sample card with incrementally larger button sizes, newspaper comic strips, a correction clipped from the newspaper.

Like much of Lexier's own work, A to B brims with a playfully profound sense of progression, of time passing, and of imposing order on the ephemerality of life. That he's able to conjure such a sense from the work of others speaks to both his curatorial skill and rigorous fo-

cus. But let's not forget his sense of humour. Lexier's gentle cheekiness informs every assemblage here, creating a tidy cabinet of wonder that asks the viewer to determine value for him or herself. Under glass and arrayed just-so, everything here is precious, Lexier seems to say.

A \$4,500 Greg Curnoe print of rough, inky-black letters offering the palindrome "niin" shares table-space with a pair of comic strip clippings.

But the theme of the show is from one point to another, whether in transformation or simply in sequence, and Lexier accomplishes this in playful ways, from Dean Drever's incrementally larger set of 10 wrenches, each engraved with a Commandment, to Hurlbut's set of five antique, toy-sized cast-iron toi-

lets in progressive states of decay. Stephen Andrew offers a rich, dark-lacquered triptych in which the thick paint recedes in every stage.

I'm a sucker for obsessive ordering, though, and Ken Nicol's ongoing project, "Counting Squares (Book)," in which the artist numbers in order, by hand, tens of thousands of compartments has the dizzying, Sisyphean sense of the interminable. In what's hopefully not a comment on its service, next to Nicol's book is its graphic echo, an order form for Toronto's Ai My restaurant (the restaurant's still operating, so likely not).

Overall, "A to B" is a remarkably generous show, to the viewer, and to the artists whose work is shown here. Lexier's contextual play between ordinary and art reveals a fascination with increment and

Curator Micah Lexier's "A to B" brims with a playfully profound sense of progression, from Dean Drever's incrementally larger set of 10 wrenches, each engraved with a Commandment, to the outside of MKG127 Gallery on Ossington Ave., where Kay Rosen's alphabet, from A through I, gives a whimsical welcome.



process, both real and puzzled-over, that's revelatory. The so-called "wunderkammer," a Renaissance convention that grouped together compelling curiosities in multiple fields, whether art, craft, science, or any of the rapidly advancing disciplines of the day, seems an apt comparison. "A to B" offers a studied glimpse at the wonder that lies under your nose, barely visible, every day of your life. Lexier brings it all together for tabletop viewing, drawing your eyes down for a look.

## JUST THE FACTS

**WHAT:** "A to B," a show of 38 artists, curated by Micah Lexier  
**WHEN:** Until July 31  
**WHERE:** MKG127, 127 Ossington Ave.