

R12 Review



GARY MICHAEL DAULT GALLERY GOING

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SCHOOL OF ART AT MKG127

Until Sept. 5,
127 Ossington Ave.,
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Most summer group shows are desperate or slack and lack charm in equal measure. This one, School of Art, is refreshingly different, mostly because it is laced with history and tinctured with nostalgia – especially for gallery director Michael Klein.

It was Klein's happy idea to bring together work by five artists, all of whom were his teachers at the University of Manitoba's School of Art between 1978 and 1982 (Klein is a successful photographer as well as a gallery owner). There are beautiful small paintings on silk by painter-printmaker Robert Achtemichuk (now executive director at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, Ont.), and two terrific, big paintings by veteran artist Sheila Butler, who, despite being a brilliant (and inexplicably undervalued) painter, taught Klein a course in Inuit art. There is an epic work by Jeff Funnell, who has furnished a funny, touching and exhaustingly complete autobiography in cartoon format, and portrait photographs by David McMillan ("His passion for the medium," Klein notes, "was infectious"). And there are truly remarkable and enjoyable video works by Rita McKeough, who won a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts this year.

There's McKeough taking a potted pine tree for a walk, for example, or hacking herself a niche in the drywall of an art gallery and nestling into it. "Rita's printmaking classes were like no other," writes Klein, "full of laughter and punk rock."