

Bold strokes, mad dashes

BY ROBERT EVERETT-GREEN
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THE FIGURE of the artist-as-wild-man, familiar as it has become, still holds romantic appeal for some people, including a few artists. Adly Gawad, whose works are on view at the Garnet Press Gallery until Aug. 23, paints in a conspicuously wild and vigorous way, sometimes daubing his first name within a device built around the circumscribed "A" beloved of graffiti makers.

In this case, A stands for anarchy, meaning that B is for Bakunin, who was no artist but as political actor he just might have been able to upstage Ronald Reagan. Gawad, to the extent that he affects the anti-nomian pose, is also an actor though, unlike those other two, he can paint, sometimes quite well.

This is most apparent in the simpler paintings, like one of a red-armed, insect-like figure hunched over a table. Here Gawad has held his lurid color sense to a few bold contrasts, and let the strength of his composition and draftsmanship carry the image. It is as a draftsman that he is most impressive, in fact. The paintings that are weakest in this show are those in which Gawad has forgotten this, and allowed a creeping scourge of obsessive mark-making to take over.

Two cut-out masonite panels are sacrificed to this truly anarchic form of decoration. In another, executed on a fringed window blind, the decoration takes the less corrosive form of a series of calligraphic tattoos applied to the skin of Gawad's trysting nudes. The effect is like that of an art brut variation on one of Gustav Klimt's highly decorated embraces. The small paintings, by contrast, show what happens when Gawad's fluid line falters of its own accord. The life simply

drops out of the image, and we are left with a messy smear of color underlying a poorly executed cartoon.

When the line is under control, however, Gawad's images have a directly compelling quality that heralds good things to come from this young Toronto artist.

Also in the Garnet Press Gallery are several constructions by Andrew O1. The name of one of these, Architecture City Scape, conveys the tone of O1's critical-sculptural essays on the state of architecture. The piece itself is a standing wall work in which Styrofoam and plaster replicas of prefab building components have been embedded in a streetscape of cement and asphalt. O1's two Reconstructions deploy the

ON SHOW

same materials along a pair of wide metal arcs.

Together, these works take a broad swipe at architectural disharmony, symbolized most obviously by the jumble of modern building blocks along the classical arc of the Reconstructions. Beyond this, O1's precise critical intent is obscure. Perhaps it is adequately mirrored in this description, which he allowed to appear in a press release announcing this show: "The deconstructions are reconstructions of structural non-decorative elements in decorative non-structural arrangements of a temporal nature."

Adly Gawad's bold works, which herald good things to come.

