

## IN REVIEW



George Farmer, *Paved With Good Intentions, Or Road Warrior*, bronze, limestone, fools gold.



Tom Monohan, *Fish Out of Water... Recent Rings*, limestone, marble.



Stephen Andrews, linocut print.

hoop traversed in the middle by a saw edge. In the bottom half are wire silhouettes of building forms encased in rippled glass; a male figure suspended in mid-air pole vaults through the top half. For Farmer the ragged edge represents the Berlin Wall and the man the aspiration "to get to the other side of things." But his choice of an athlete also conjures memories of the 1936 Olympics under Hitler and the '72 Olympics in Munich where eight Israeli athletes were murdered. Themes of culture and the death of culture are strong and clear, whether intended or not.

In *Road Warrior* an imposing figure stands on a fragment of road that ends in a pile of rubble painted gold. The sentinel uses the double helix spiral supporting twisted body made of flat bronze plates. The mixture of soft stone and hard metal and the strange shapes and relationships attract and impress, but the import, a warning of human folly, is rather mundane.

The realization of human folly, on the other hand, seems to be the cynical target of *Urban Planning*. A square tablecloth is bound by green tinted wood, and covered with green maple keys, on which rectangles of slate are carefully laid, leaving a tic-tac-toe pattern of cracks. Two monster plants made of double-helix stems and lobster claw shaped heads stick up through the cracks and look around carnivorously. Mutant life springing from an environment where nature is forced down by stone — a more cynical view of the things we humans do to each other could not be asked for.

Toronto's **Angela Houpt** is the senior artist of this trio by 16 years, although she has only been showing for 11 of them. Her *Tel* of 1982 is made of four slabs of limestone fitted together as if they had been unearthed in an archaeological dig. Their surface is shaped to represent a sandy beach marked by the imprint of recent waves. Along the beach one

can see human footprints petrified in the stone. The statement here has to do with the impossibility of the subject matter: footprints on a beach are not the stuff of archaeology but of the transient flow of time. The pull between the present moment and time past, between the little of our culture that gets recorded and the magnitude of what does not, are well evoked.

A more visually enjoyable piece for the variety of materials used is the punnishly titled *Artifactual Environment*, where a giant alabaster conch shell is housed in an ordinary fish tank. The faulty facts are many: a tank is doubtless an artificial environment for a shell, yet it is factually there; then again, it is not really a shell. Added to the content is the fact that the water is gradually eating away the alabaster, so that eventually there will be nothing left, an echo of the concerns of the *Tel* piece.

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Harbourfront 1, *Girling 0*: The most ambitious show of the summer must have been the **Riot, Calm & Luxury** show at the Art Gallery at Harbourfront, June 28 to September 8. There was something fun about wandering around the Harbourfront grounds and being surprised by a mural or a sculpture outside, but much of the art was deliberately aimed at fighting the complacency of the urban park environment. Curator Oliver Girling wanted his artists to "reclaim (the park) from the structuralists", but mostly they just showed up poorly against it. A standout piece was a giant linocut print, on the side of a hill by Stephen Andrews, showing a mirror image (the linocut and its imprint) of a woman-figure with two small figures fighting inside her torso. She is surrounded by an infinity sign drawn in dashes like the centre line of a highway, has an umbilical cord attached to her belly and two heads where her upraised hands should be. Ideas of birth, killing and the cycle of being, underscore the strong visual design.

An interesting post-script was a sculpture made of fence posts by Andrew Ol, a self-proclaimed statement against the fascist nature of private property, with a note attached saying that though he was not invited to exhibit, he is doing it anyway. This piece wins one battle, but ultimately in the war between art and the urban park, the park won hands down. ■

**Author**

Mitch Moldofsky is a Toronto freelance writer.