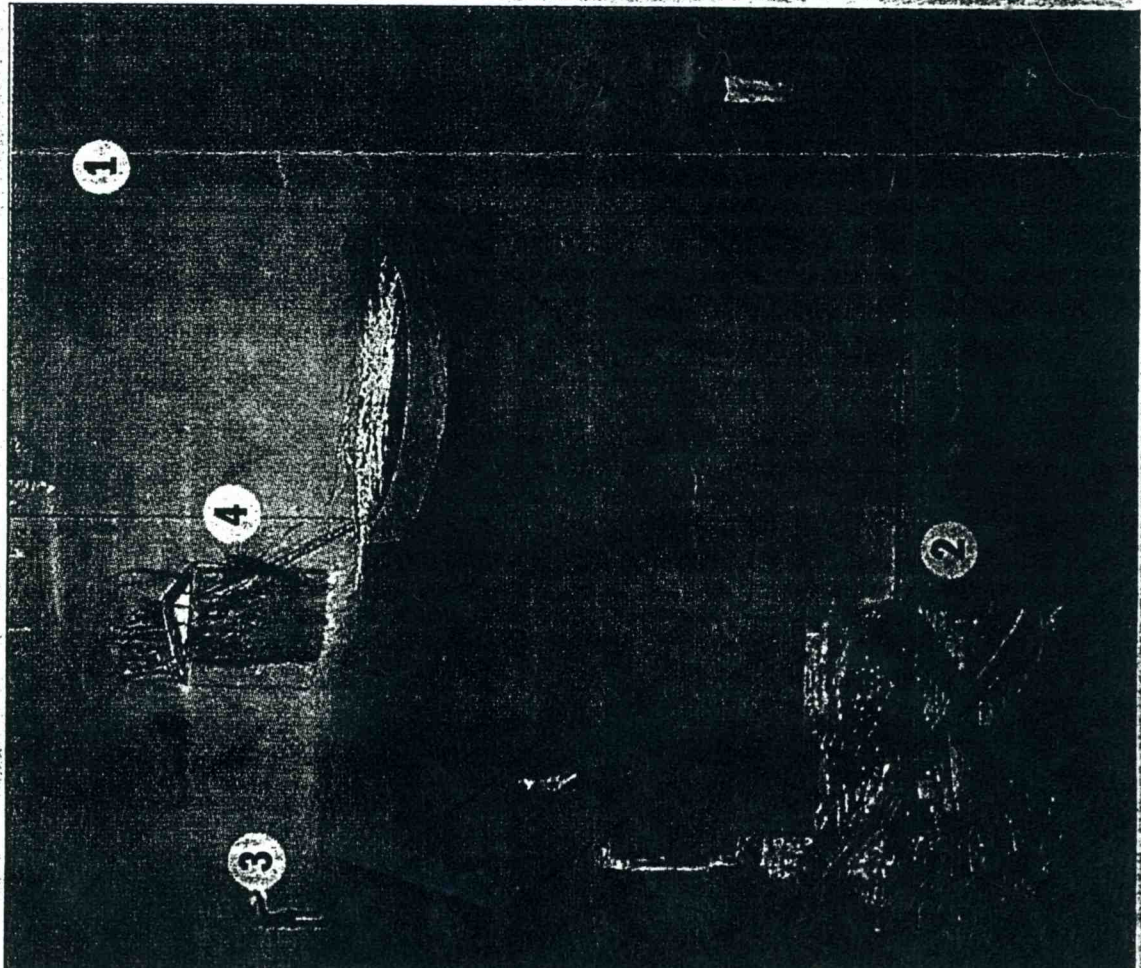


# Art by Numbers

POOL ATTENDANTS, MIXED MEDIA (2000), BY CLINT AND SCOTT GRIFFIN



The Griffin brothers are young artists whose work is just beginning to be noticed by collectors of contemporary Canadian art. Clint, 29, and Scott, 30, have already had numerous solo and group exhibits since leaving the Ontario College of Art about three years ago, and have begun to make names for themselves as imaginative artists working in mixed media. They are accustomed to collaborating, but their current show is their first dual show since 1995.

It's called Set-Up, after an ongoing game they played as children and continued into early adulthood.

The brothers grew up on a farm outside Port Hope, Ont., where they created an elaborate imaginary world from everyday objects, which they called "the set-up." They developed more than 1,000 characters to inhabit their world and imagined events for its past and present.

Their show is a re-embodiment of the game, as well as a reliving of it — they use found objects, just as they did for the game, to create works of art. Photographs, wood board, even old tubing and eaves troughing appear in a sculpture called *Snorkeller*. The rough-hewn materials suggest the pure imaginative state of a child who can transform any old object into something fantastic.

The themes of imagination and biography are evident in their work, says gallery owner Virginia MacDonnell.

1 In pool attendants, the pair used a found piece of board as their 64-inch by 69-inch background. It has rough, chipped edges and the grain of the wood is visible through the applied oil paint, acrylic, pencil and encaustic (coloured wax).

2 A found aerial photograph glued to the board background shows a rural junction, which includes barns, cars, tractors, machinery, train tracks and other elements of rural life. The scene is both a biographical reference to the Griffins' childhood in the country, as well as a fond remembrance of a boy's fascination with vehicles and machinery.

3 Three figures inhabit the scene. They could be anyone, says MacDonnell, but the one in the top holds an airplane, which she considers to be a representation of Scott Griffin.

When the boys played Set-Up as children, Scott was responsible for creating the vehicles, she explains. The figure in the bottom right could be Clint, while the figure in the middle appears a bit older. MacDonnell suggests it could be representation of the artists' father. Though the figures are separate from each other and from the community pictured in the photograph, they aren't completely isolated — they seem to be looking at each other.

4 A barn is burning in the scene, but the figures appear to be going about their business, unconcerned that it is on fire. A ladder stretches between the burning barn and an above-

ground pool. Ironically, though, this pool is empty, and there is no way to put out the fire.

MacDonnell suggests the barn may represent the pure imagination of childhood, which is being transformed by fire, while the community may suggest the practical concerns of adulthood.

"This (painting) is about transformation," says MacDonnell. "They're not right in the community, they're not in the barn, they're in the ambiguous space in between."

— Daphne Gordon

A regular feature that takes a closer look at art in public places. Set-Up is at the V. MacDonnell Gallery, 1340 Queen St. W., to Dec. 30.