

Birds of a feather

>> Montreal artists Sylvain Bouthillette and David Elliott, yin to each other's yang.



JASON FELKER

Two in the bush: ELLIOTT (L) AND BOUTHILLETTE

by RUPERT BOTTENBERG

Give a thousand monkeys the same tool, a typewriter, and one of them's bound to stumble on something publishable, at least by *Mirror* standards. Now give Montreal visual artists Sylvain Bouthillette and David Elliott the same tools—canvas, colour, a shared studio and a grab-bag of common “trigger” elements such as birds and stars—and they will come to very different, yet equally effective, conclusions.

Elliott's works are based in the pop art aesthetic of the '60s, initially charming the viewer with innocent ephemera that, considered more deeply, spell out a story as sweet or sour as the viewer's own reading allows. Bouthillette, the one-time bass player of Montreal's prog-punk figureheads Bliss, presents a more surly, chaotic vision, under which lies a very positive message of hope, faith and self-awareness.

As the beer was chilling for the vernissage of the dual exhibition *Fra Delinquenti*, the *Mirror* sat the duo down for a compare-as-you-dare chat.

Mirror: The two of you aren't just sharing wall space at the Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges. You share a studio as well.

Sylvain Bouthillette: We've shared this studio for four years, but before that, he had his studio across the corridor from me, so we were always really close. I tend to spread right up to his side anyway.

David Elliott: We first met at a school-house space in Little Burgundy. You know, the regular exchanges, back and forth across the hall, looking for screwdrivers and tubes of paint.

M: Now you're sharing more than just tools. It strikes me that your paintings are

two sides of the same coin.

DE: This show suggests that there are common things between us, and there are, like the birds and the stars. But we're also very different in terms of approach. Sylvain's imagery comes out of hardcore and skateboard culture. I'm 10 years older than he is, so I

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