

# Teacups the mind can drink from: GALLERY GOING

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## Teacups the mind can drink from

### GALLERY GOING

GILLIAN MACKAY

**L**éopold Foulem, the provocative Montreal ceramicist who won the Jean A. Chalmers National Crafts Award earlier this year, has made it his mission to violate what Alice Munro has called the "tinkling inanities" of middle-class, drawing-room decorum. "My work has to do with taste, but it is never tasteful," he has said, by way of a credo. In his current show at Toronto's Prime Gallery, he does a number on teacups. In *Cup and Saucer with Red Bull*, he attaches a plastic toy bull as a handle on a pink, ceramic cup form that is solid rather than hollow (these are cups that only the mind can drink from). A metal doorknob serves as a base for the cup and a silver candy dish as the saucer. Elsewhere, there are handles made from a plastic doll's arm, a Batman head, a carved wooden moose. My favourite is *Cup and Saucer with Shard*, an avocado-green cup spackled with scarlet (Foulem uses tacky commercial glazes that look like they belong on oversized ashtrays), nestled inside the shard of a fancy gilded teacup. It, in turn, is fused to a blue Kraft mayonnaise lid that rests on another frilly silver-plate "saucer." In these 15 witty, surrealist works, Foulem's confounding of conventional categories — precious and disposable, useful and ornamental — guarantees you will never look at a china cabinet in quite the same way again. All work \$3,500. Until Oct. 30. 52 McCaul St., Toronto. 416-593-0942.

#### Intimations at Angell Gallery

The full laundry basket in the window of this storefront gallery makes you wonder if owner Jamie Angell is heading out to the coin wash. But, no, the eye-catching bundle is the opener in Megan Whiten's entertaining, kiss-and-tell installation, *Laundry*. Pinned to a clothesline inside are dozens of faded pillow-



Foulem's Cup and Saucer with Turtle: taste without being tasteful.

cases bearing embroidered inscriptions of adolescent epithets: Dweeb, Surf Dude, Airhead, Girlfriend, Fashion Queen, Manipulative Bastard, to name several. The show, curated by Jessica Wyman, also presents Susan Fothergill's charming prints of lacy stockings and underwear, Genevieve Wiseman's tender, blurred photographs of domestic interiors and Jill Henderson's satiric cartoon, *Young, Sexy and Free*, all of which contribute to the giddy, slumber-party mood. From \$69 to \$700. 890 Queen St. W., Toronto. 416-530-0044.

#### Clint Griffin and Michelle Johnson at BUS

This weekend is the last opportunity to catch must-see twin installations at the western venue of Toronto's BUS gallery, plus Griffin's compelling solo show of works on paper at the more central branch. In her site-specific work at 1237 Queen St. W., Johnson invites us to experience the rundown interior of the building like a patient with a

terminal illness. Within its rabbit warren of tiny rooms, she has inserted latex orifices into the walls that we probe with a strange sense of licence and violation; she paints a wall blue and extends the colour into a puddle-like shape on the floor, suggesting a kind of architectural incontinence. Griffin staples to the scuffed-up walls found photographs that bear only fragments of their original content — usually people — then draws and paints around them. The lyrical, poignant making note of each other away from the ground suggests the fragile, yet electric connection between a male and a female figure. Among the works on paper, looking out for pirates stands out for its vertiginous composition and gritty, urban loneliness. From \$80-\$1,600. Until Oct. 23 at 1237 Queen St. W. and Oct. 24 at 1080 Queen St. W., Toronto. 416-537-8827.

#### Kazuo Nakamura at Christopher Cutts

The senior Japanese-Canadian art-

ist Kazuo Nakamura, who began his career as a landscape painter and has for several decades now devoted himself to transcribing number sequences onto graph paper, is a fascinating, anomalous figure in contemporary art. Six cool, beautiful abstract paintings from the 1960s and early 1970s at Christopher Cutts depict the intermediate stage in his lifelong quest to penetrate the mysteries of structure and form. Two minimalist grid paintings, *Topological Series 1 and 5*, both from 1968, depict geometric shapes evocative of unfolding flowers and collapsing screens. Nakamura made them by laying thin tape down on unprimed canvas, overpainting in black oil, then peeling the tape away. A computer could have done it in no time: What is compelling about these paintings is the friction between the endearing, man-made imperfections (the little places where the black smudged into the white lines) and the mathematical ideal. In the back gallery there is a delicious, small work made by scrunching the used tape into a ball and imprinting it onto paper. It's called, with evident humour, *Chaos*. From \$12,500 to \$40,000. Until Nov. 6. 21 Morrow Ave., Toronto. 416-532-7272.

#### Sandra Gregson at V. MacDonnell

The sleeping head of a boy, cast in lead and lying on the floor, might be dreaming this strange, beautiful installation. He might be having nightmares about his own decapitation and toxicity. Or perhaps his thoughts are floating in mid-air where fragments of an old log-cabin quilt, as richly coloured as a stained-glass window, are suspended from the ceiling in a tent-like configuration. He may be wondering about the bizarre, ruffled cushion in the corner made from silvery, tar-coated paper — or simply letting all these images of birth, sleep and loss flow by in a vivid, unconscious stream. From \$1,800-\$5,000. Until Nov. 13. 1340 Queen St. W., Toronto. 416-534-3259.