

Griffin Enlarged

BY **SHEILA HETI**

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Rating: **NNN**

fortress canada is the first show of large-scale paintings by Clint Griffin, an artist who previously worked small, with found photographs. He'd scratch and disassemble them, and the result would be haunting, stricken scenes. The new paintings retain that scratched-together quality, while a basic question connects the work: what are the various landscapes of a heroless world a hiccup away from mass, paranoid retreat?

In Fortress Canada, a painting on a stained and battered board, he's stapled a snapshot of a ruined but regal chair and painted a surrounding army of sad orange pylons. Self-Portrait As Receiver is just as vulnerable: a rudimentary human figure is drawn in pencil in a childlike hand, while a swarm of industrial staples hovers oppressively above it.

These are among the best works. The blunt found objects give the pieces confidence and reach, providing a counterweight to the hesitancy of his hand.

But Griffin's gift for the light touch, for the iconic and the mysterious, gets lost in many of his purely painted works, which seem muddied without the anchor of a foreign object. Scattered, they rarely resolve into something sure.

Fear for the world is the idea propelling this show, and his solution for us all also applies to his own work. Salvation lies not in an apocalyptic turning inward but in dialogue with the literal stuff of the world. art@nowtoronto.com

CLINT GRIFFIN at Katharine Mulherin Gallery (1086 Queen West) to April 7. 416-537-8827. Rating: NNN

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