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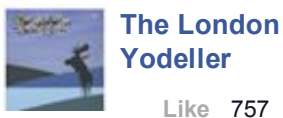
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Beg, Borrow, or Steal – There’s More Than One Way to Find Inspiration

Vince Cherniak - December 4, 2014 - Art & Books



Picasso’s Meninas

“Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal,” said Igor Stravinsky. I hope he was paraphrasing someone he heard, just to give the line a little added depth. Hard to argue with that observation though, and there’s a few examples in town right now proving the adage.

Over several decades, locals Peggy and Grant Reuber assembled a quite remarkable collection of international works on paper, now on public display for the first time at McIntosh Gallery. There are several delightful images here. Etchings by Marc Chagall were created for an illustrated work of Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, a satire on mid-18th century Russian provincial life. Several French masters are represented: a charming small Degas ballerina, and

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a boldly coloured Rouault, *Passion: Christ Before the Temple*, an etching and aquatint from 1935. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec captures his muse, *Louise Balthy*, a famous actress, comedienne and belle chanteuse, in delicate line work as she rides in a carriage.

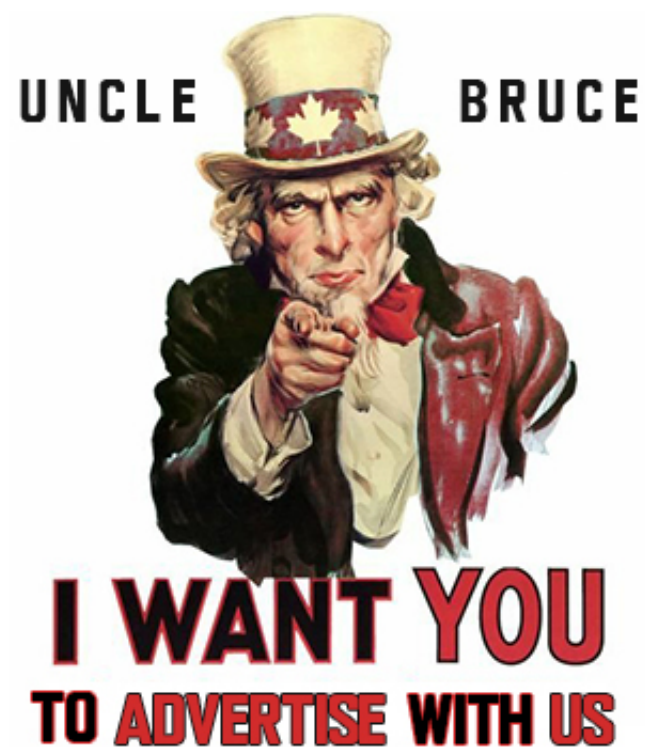
Of course, the popartists of the '60s were stealing like crazy from advertising and the pop culture celebrity machine, and borrowing from found images. A case in point is a curious Robert Rauschenberg here, *Romances, Myth* (Lithograph, 1977) that juxtaposes an apparently nude couple on the right with two large Bosch spark plugs on the left. There's an ear of corn thrown in, to complete this tribute to fecundity, if that's what it is.

There are two strong homage pieces in this collection that are openly borrowing or stealing — you be the judge. Apparently Pablo Picasso revisited Manet's *Le Dejeuner sur L'Herbe* in several tributes throughout his career, creating over 100 variations in various styles. In a version here, a linocut from 1962, the figures all seem to meld together; their meal has not just brought them together, but nearly unified them in a singular spirit it would seem.

As Western M.A. candidate Brad Morosan says in notes here, "For Picasso, working on an older painting allowed him to experiment continually with figures and poses in a limited sphere. In the case of *Le Dejeuner sur L'Herbe*, an open-air scene afforded him the opportunity to integrate the human body into an idyllic pastoral landscape. His variations demonstrate the connection between originality and imitation, and how all new art builds on past efforts. Picasso is laying bare the process of how artists can interpret works of the past, and then adds something uniquely their own."

But then there's Richard Hamilton's provocative, *Picasso's Meninas*, a riot of grand artistic theft. Not only is he riffing on Pablo's prolific periods and styles, but also on the guy Picasso's ripping off, Diego Velázquez. Picasso had done a multitude of his own takes on the famous *Las Meninas*. And so with Hamilton's take, we have, in effect, an interesting double homage.

When Hamilton was asked to contribute to an homage portfolio of prints to celebrate Picasso's 90th birthday in 1971, he made this print, with the assistance of Picasso's own etcher, Aldo Crommelynck. It's a stew of borrowed Picasso



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periods, including the bull from *Guernica*, all compacted into the dizzying frame of Velázquez with its “near infinity of cross reflections,” as Hamilton observed. Notes Morasan, “Hamilton substitutes a realistic depiction of Picasso himself in place of the 17th century painter’s self-portrait . . . When we realize that Hamilton along with his wife is reflected in the mirror on the back wall, the homage comes full circle.”

The McIntosh also features an anthology of short videos from seven Quebec artists in *VideoZoom: Between-the-Images*. There’s a little appropriation, if not visual theft, from popular culture happening here as well, notably in Frederic Lavoie’s revision of a scene from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, played in reverse with reworked dialogue. Not to be missed is Michel de Broin’s *Cut in the Dark*. As with de Broin’s sculpture and installation pieces, there’s deft poetic humour at play; a serene summer evening is presented, but for one glaring lamp post in the foreground — until a lumberjack shows up with a metal saw.

micheldebroyin.org/cut-into-the-dark

The Grant and Peggy Reuber Collection of International Works on Paper

VideoZoom: Between-the-Images

McIntosh Gallery until December 6


McIntoshgallery.ca




The influence of Canadian landscape painting, from Emily Carr to the Group of Seven runs deep in our collective catalogue of iconic images. It’s no different for painters Jamie Jardine and

Donna Andreychuk in the show ***Crossroads*** at Westland Gallery. A sense of homage to the palettes of Tom Thomson and J.W. Morrice comes out in the works of Jardine. It’s so well done, as in his *Forest Interior* with its meditative contrast between shadow

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and light, that it's nearly canvas déjà vu. Andreychuk's brushwork honours a more complex blend of influences, from impressionism to abstract expressionism, though *Tangled Garden* seems to borrow heavily from J.E.H. MacDonald. But her works leaning more to the abstract, pieces like *Crossroads*, do pop off the wall and steal the show.

Crossroads

Westland Gallery until December 6

Westlandgallery.ca

Beg, borrow or steal, the epigram goes, but — wait, can you beg for images too?

Apparently so, as DNA artspace demonstrates in their engaging new exhibit, *Carte Blanche*. The gallery sent out a call – well, postcards in fact – to 100 plus artists across the country with a mandate for the recipients to create a work with the postcard in collaboration with a fellow artist of their choice. No other parameters were set; the artists had carte blanche to do as they pleased. The results are as expected: there's a cornucopia of images, from the restrained and delicate collaboration between Jamelie Hassan and Troy Ouellette, to Nick Farmer and Lefty Smudges (you can identify the obvious ebullient Farmer drawing style, but just what did Lefty do? Good question.) And then there're the iconoclasts (postcard-oclasts?) Neil Klassen and Ella Dawn McGeough who sandwiched their postcard between equivalent-sized chunks of concrete board. Is there an image buried in there? We beg to know.

Carte Blanche

DNA artspace until December 20

dnaartspace.com

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