



top left: Sky Glabush, *New Year*, 2008, oil on canvas, 84 x 120". All images courtesy MKG127, Toronto, and the artist.

middle: Sky Glabush, *Blue House*, 2008, oil on canvas, 84 x 120".

lower left: Sky Glabush, *Scaffold Jump*, 2009, oil on canvas, 45 x 80".

Rental Properties

London, Ontario, artist **Sky Glabush** has been interested in architecture for a number of years, and in "Renting," his most recent exhibition at MKG127, Michael Klein's Toronto gallery, he built new ideas around the notion of painting architecture.

BORDER CROSSINGS: There are only four large paintings of houses in the exhibition. Are they meant to be distinctive houses?

SKY GLABUSH: They are allegorical in that they're barely inhabited. They are very modest, liminal houses. I wanted buildings that weren't really modern but weren't un-modern; houses that weren't so Victorian you'd say, "Oh, that's a regional house," or so archetypically prairie that you'd think Frank Lloyd Wright. I wanted them to be almost nothing, houses that were emblematic of a kind of loss.



BC: *Scaffold Jump* has that feeling more than the other three. It looks abandoned, as if it were either unfinished or in the process of being torn down.

SG: It's a frat house, a party shack on the verge of being condemned. The paintings of the other houses are almost iconic, but in *Scaffold Jump*, the house is less important than the narrative context around it.

BC: There are so many different styles of mark making and ways of rendering objects in that painting.

SG: If you look closely, you'll notice that from the right side all the trees and branches are an inverted mark, the absence of a mark. They're the empty space that has been carved out around the branches. As the painting progresses from right to left, the material language shifts, and all the branches and things in the painting are stated rather than inverted.

BC: I often couldn't tell if the paint was applied or revealed. Was it put on or scratched off?



SG: It's both. The colour of the house is a bit like Bonnard in that I probably went through 30 transmutations of slightly rubbing paint on top of the last layer so that it glows. In a sense, the painting is a lexicon of all the different ways I could think to make pictorial space. Things like realism meant nothing to me. What I was really interested in was seeing how much I could remove: what if I were to strip away gesture, style and anything that could suggest overt embellishment? I would leave only the house, the bare minimum of an image. What would happen? In terms of being a contemporary artist, there is nothing in that painting to signal that I'm fashionable or faddy. It's just this mundane, crappy little wartime house. But when you strip those things down as far as you can without becoming abstract, you ask yourself, "what is the language of my painting?" and then you start to replace and build. So by the time I got to



top left: Sky Glabush,
White Out, 2008, oil on
canvas, 84 x 108".

Scaffold Jump, which is the most recent painting in the exhibition, I was trying to explore the widest range of painterly techniques that I had at my disposal.

BC: Will you continue with this project of moving through your painting lexicon?

SG: I walked you through *Scaffold Jump* and described some of the motifs and the technical things that

happened but were completely subliminal. None of it was pre-thought.

BC: But now that you know it, you're trapped inside your own knowledge.

SG: I think what I'm getting, and what I want, is to subvert my own thinking about painting. I want to be able to immerse myself in making these things and let the chips fall where they may. I don't want to be quite so sure, or so explicit, about the lexicon.

BC: These paintings aren't about irony at all, then. They represent your commitment and involvement in this process of doubt.

SG: That's my problem. I've never been able to do irony very well. But I love Dostoevsky, and I love losers, and I want my paintings to be about things that are just a little bit on the loser side. ■

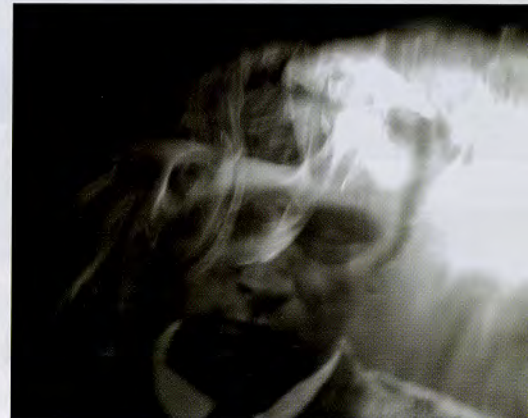
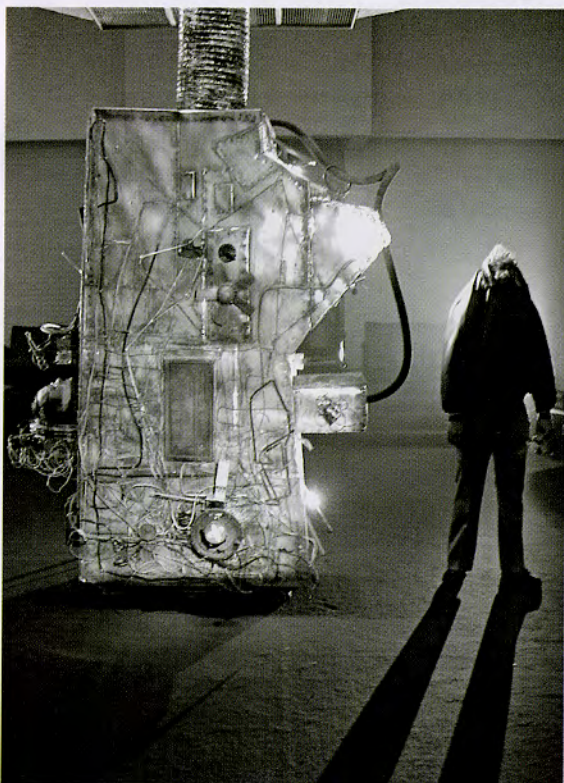
Rankin File

When **Matthew Rankin** was studying film in Montreal at the Institut national de l'image et du son in 2004, he couldn't get the city where he was born and raised out of his mind. "I started to think that Winnipeg was English Canada's Quebec when it comes to film." In the nationalist culture he was part of, there were discussions about the prototypical elements that went into Quebec filmmaking, and Rankin asked himself the

same question about cinema in his home town. "I've always felt that there was a singularity to Winnipeg film, so I started thinking about Guy Maddin and image degradation and self-destruction and all the themes I associate with

Winnipeg. A lot of the work I've done has been an exploration of this idea of Winnipeg formalism, and I'm making very deliberate references to Guy and John Paiz and Noam Gonick, guys who have inspired me and who have defined what Winnipeg filmmaking is all about."

Rankin's investigation of the Winnipeg style has led him to make films about the demise of the Winnipeg Jets (*Death by Popcorn: The Tragedy of the Winnipeg Jets*, 2005, along with Walter Forsberg and Mike Maryniuk); the weirdness of the city's tv commercials (*Kubasa in a Glass: Fetishised Winnipeg TV Commercials 1978-1993*, 2005); a high-speed inventory of the names and lettering on Winnipeg apartment buildings (*I Dream of Driftwood*, 2007); the story of Dave Barber's cameo appearance with a dead sea gull in *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* (*Barber Gull Rub*, 2008); and a rollicking animated



middle right: Matthew Rankin,
from *Hydro-Lévesque*, 2008,
16 minutes. Photo: Ricardo
Alms. All images courtesy
Matthew Rankin.

lower left: Matthew Rankin,
from *Hydro-Lévesque*, 2008.
Photo: Ricardo Alms.