

VISUAL ARTS

Ric Spencer



MAPPING OUT THE CITY

The night prowler

At Turner Galleries in Northbridge, Garry Pumfrey has also been out prowling our streets at night, this time engaging in the physical reality of a city that never tires of building itself. Terraform II is a series of studies and large-format paintings based on the changing skyline of the outer city and the industrial depots that fuel it.

I should say that I spent some time sharing a studio with Pumfrey so I feel like I (used to) know his work quite well. But I haven't seen it for a while and so it was a treat to walk in on these hyper-real paintings. His style has changed since I saw it last; his paintings are a lot tighter and a lot more convinced of their subject matter.

I like this definitiveness in an artist and to a certain extent it stops a lot of conjecture by someone like me. Pumfrey's impressive realism is eye candy but it's also great for the critical eye.

Moving closer to and then stepping away from Pumfrey's work questions the temporal gesture of painting. His paintings give us solid images of seemingly solid infrastructure and yet when you move right up to them, despite perhaps his best efforts, or maybe because of them, there is still the brush stroke, the fallible movement of the artist's hand.

This is what I like about this series of works. Regardless of the very critical choice of resource-based subject matter as it relates to progress and the future of our living standards, Pumfrey's refusal to accept anything less than painterly perfection brings to the fore a wonderful tension between precision and the humanity that nonetheless always infiltrates our best laid plans.

Garry Pumfrey's Terraform II is at Turner Galleries until June 14.



Realism: Garry Pumfrey's reclaim storage silo oil on linen.