

# Jeremy Drummond revisits suburbia's marginal dreamland

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"These are real street signs," Edmonton-born, Virginia-based Jeremy Drummond points out. "There really is 'Fidelity and Honeymoon'; there really is 'Whitewash and Culture.'"

Street signs are at the core of multi-media practitioner Drummond's show, *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*. Comprised of interrelated series (one a video work), plus archival photos and recent material pointing towards his further exploration of the subtext of environment and its impact on people who navigate it, the show sprawls through the main gallery space of Latitude 53 like a new development. Pieces are clustered, with small pockets and large tracts of blankness between them.

Continuing its year-long curatorial investigation of boomtown issues, Latitude 53 has paired Drummond's show with Joel Rhein's grand paintings of vanishing "Edmontonia"—ordinary spaces succumbing to the pressures of the current massive redevelopment of city space/runaway rebranding of urban aesthetic. Together, *Everybody Knows* and Rhein's *Modern Life* offer perhaps the most complete and explicit iteration of the encroachment of the depersonalization of space seen throughout the gallery's thematic romp through the worrisome questions raised by Edmonton's oil-fuelled growth.

Drummond's project began as snapshots taken in Brampton, Ontario. Part of the enormous ring of communities and economic regions surrounding Toronto like a moat of defensive banality, Brampton's developments express suburbia in varying ways.

"I did a couple video projects about suburbia that just seemed to reiterate stereotypes," Drummond recounts. "I wanted to get beyond

PREVIEW

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**EVERYBODY KNOWS THIS IS NOWHERE**

BY JEREMY DRUMMOND  
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that—what's unique about the suburbs? What are the differences between them? They're not all the same. And that became the basis of the work: how contemporary suburbs are different from historical suburbs."

**HE SEIZED ON USING** genuine but improbable sets of street names to convey the aspirations of these communities and invoke their inherent contradictions. The glossy, candy-coloured "Street Signs" paintings have a strong presence, realistically dimensioned and hung linearly and at near-actual street sign height. They consist of nothing more than a life-sized image of an intersection sign, splayed against an intense hue provided by paint from the Martha Stewart Collection.

"These signs embed this kind of leftover Utopian vision," Drummond says. "And paint names share that." An autobody shop executed the background, encoding another layer of reference by implicating the suburban relationship with transportation, and also making them blindingly slick.

Another series, "Drive By," counterpoints the icy clarity of "Street Signs." Taken from a moving vehicle as Drummond searched for photogenic intersections, it captures the oppressive sameness of the suburbs, the aggressive impersonality of these neighbourhoods, blurring them onto texturized panels that blunt the light illuminating them and recall grainy Tupperware from the early '70s. These page-sized prints are arranged in a grid, irregularly

missing frames.

"Drive By" betrays Drummond's video background, distorting time and motion in a way that borrows from the lexicon of moving images but is divorced from its narrative drive. It tricks the eye and the brain into recognizing it as a familiar landscape, and inducing a host of private and broad cultural associations we have with this genre of space.

"When I see a grid with spaces pulled out or yet to be put in, there's an implied transition in that environment," Drummond notes. "I have hundreds of photos of these areas in transition—pathetic trees, manmade lakes, piles of sod—images that signify the scale of the environments and that industry. I'm interested in rapid growth—what happens when these neighbourhoods immediately go up and people move in but it's still this problematic space, in between the rural and the urban."

Some photos are shown in conjunction with blanked-out street sign images, again working with the disparity between dream and reality, branding and deceit, development and community.

His accompanying video work restores people to these places. In "This Could Be Anywhere, This Could Be Everywhere," Drummond mixes more suburban glimpses with footage of Brampton residents in front of its public library. A litany of accepted and rejected street names—proposed by residents or developers—from Brampton municipal records is given voice by the people whose homes line these streets.

"The stereotypes we have of suburbs are from the '50s, and they don't really exist anymore," Drummond states. "I read that this is one of most culturally diverse areas in North America. Why do these ubiquitous environments lack all culture then? What is it about?" ▾