

Education

Master of Fine Arts, Painting, University of Alberta (1997)

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Painting, University of Calgary (1993)

Emma Lake Drawing & Painting Workshop, University of Saskatchewan (1992)

Art and Design Program, Medicine Hat College (1989 – 91)

Academic Awards: Dean's List, University of Calgary (1993), Louise McKinney Scholarship (1991 and 1992), Hutchinson Architects' Scholarship (1991), Alexander Rutherford Scholarship (1989).

Solo Exhibitions

2019 ***Tree Island***, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton.

Tree Island is a place in the imagination, where two worlds meet. It is a place where we encounter the wilderness, on the fringes of the built world. It is a place where our conflicting inner selves meet: the person who is part of nature by birth, and the person who is forever separated from it.

For years my work has dealt with familiar subjects from my life in the centre of a city. In Tree Island, I turn to the edges of the wild world. Of course, my forest is a highly mediated one. It exists in television shows and cinema, and in fleeting incursions into the world beyond the city. Gentle pathways lead us up steep mountains. Infrared strobe lights on trail cameras bring two worlds together for a moment. Recreational vehicles crawl along winding forest paths, bringing domesticity deep into the woods.

Tree Island is a flickering recollection of encounters with a universe both familiar and mysterious, where we look into an almost forgotten wilderness and it looks back at us.

2013 ***Backlit Memories***, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton.

In *Backlit Memories*, the unique beauty and power of the preliminary tonal layer is brought to the fore, combining the scale and substance of a finished oil painting with the freshness of a sketch in a single work. Masters' abandoned under paintings and sketches informed this approach. Tonal drawings and water-based works held clues, providing a template for a monumental painting with the lightness of a drawing. Raphael Rubinstein's "Provisional Painting" (*Art in America* 5/4/09) delivers a critical framework for these new paintings. Rubinstein analyzes the work of painters who create finished works which contain an offhand, casual, or gestural quality, in "a struggle with a medium that can seem too invested in permanence and virtuosity." Rubinstein identifies a trend in contemporary painting which he links to "a foundational skepticism that runs through the history of modern art." The paintings in *Backlit Memories* are lighter and thinner, and more adventurous, occupying an undefined zone, somewhere between sketching, illustration, and the grand ambitions of painting.

The source of the images in *Backlit Memories* underscores the artist's lighter touch and more casual engagement with his subject. The work contains a mix of carefully composed landscapes, casual snapshots, along with screen captures of video, and photographs from social media sites. The title of the exhibition refers to the illuminated screen where we view, rather than print, our photographs, and also to the back-lighting which illuminates the paintings, composed in thin layers of translucent colours, lit from behind by a smooth white ground.

2011 ***Temporary City***, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton.

Temporary City examines abandoned spaces and the people who claim them. *Haikyo I* and *II* reference the Japanese concept of modern ruins and associated subculture of urban exploration. Urban explorers occupy vacant spaces temporarily, in accordance with their own code of behaviour, but outside the law. As the first figure to appear in these landscapes steps into the frame of *Haikyo I*, the viewer is invited to wander through history's freshest set of ruins. What we once experienced as new becomes part of the past: a meditation on Modernism in decline. A series of paintings of a single abandoned house illustrates a property whose claim is disputed. Urban artists scrawl their names in paint across the facade; property managers respond with hastily-applied coats of house paint. The result is a dialogue about legitimate occupancy of our neighbourhoods, or a battle against egotistical vandalism, depending upon your perspective. The ongoing argument in paint documents the final days of a place, and reasserts the power of pigment on a board to provoke a passionate response.

2010 ***Nocturnes***, Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat.

Curated by Joanne Marion of the Esplanade public Art Gallery, the retrospective *Nocturnes* featured twenty paintings drawn from fifteen private and two public collections, produced between 2005 and 2010.

2009 ***The Neglected Garden***, Agnes Bugera Gallery, Edmonton.

I continued to explore change in the urban landscape in *The Neglected Garden* (June 2009), an exhibition of new work drawn from a variety of sites in central Edmonton. *The Neglected Garden* focused on buildings in extreme stages of transition – derelict houses tagged with graffiti; family homes turned into offices and abandoned at night; a back alley shed and an east-Edmonton rooming house. As in the neglected garden of the title work, nightfall brings an eerie sense of stillness and abandonment, rather than the comforting warmth of domesticity.

2007 ***Ghost Lake***, Agnes Bugera Gallery, Edmonton.

The paintings depict a late-evening walk through familiar neighbourhoods, and invite the viewer to reflect upon the memory of places and the changing landscape of a growing city. In the *Ghost Lake*, I explored a group of homes in Edmonton's Belgravia neighbourhood which were removed to make way for the city's South LRT extension. The nocturnal setting, and the reference to the vanished lake upon which much of the adjoining McKernan neighbourhood was built, offered the opportunity to quietly reflect on multiple generations of change.

1998 ***Unnatural Memories***, The Works Festival, Edmonton.

- 1997 *The News for Real*, Medicine Hat Cultural Centre.
Exposure, Commerce Place Galleria, Edmonton.
Nantucket Sleighride: An Unsolved Mystery, FAB Gallery, Edmonton.
- 1994 *Fade to Black*, Medicine Hat Cultural Centre Gallery.
- 1993 *Escape from the Seventh Floor*, Devonian Gardens Gallery, Calgary.

Group Exhibitions

- 2022 Winter Group Exhibition, Peter Robertson Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta
December 17 – February 18, 2023
- 2016 Landscapes Reconstructed, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta
June 19 – October 16, 2016
- 2015-16 Night Hours, Artworks for the Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts,
Art Gallery of St. Albert
- 2014-16 *Eye and the City*, Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition (multiple venues).
- 2014 *Fresh Paint: A Snapshot of Painting in Edmonton*, University of Alberta Museums, Enterprise Square Gallery.
- 2014 *Duets: Shared Ideas in Painting*, University of Alberta Museums, Enterprise Square Gallery.
- 2005-13 *Art on the Block*, Group Auction & Exhibition, Art Gallery of Alberta.
- 2008 *Noctuary*, Agnes Bugera Gallery, Edmonton.
- Following the solo exhibition *Ghost Lake*, I examined a vanishing urban icon: the phone booth. Just as the grain elevator was to the prairies, the phone booth was once a defining element of the urban landscape. It offered a welcoming beacon of light in the evening, and a private space in the middle of public thoroughfares (a space that suggested transformative powers in countless works of fiction). They were at one time so common as to be mundane, simply another visual building block in our cityscape. Now, they are disappearing – yet another change to the landscape that we will not fully appreciate until after it is complete. Less than a year after beginning this project, half of the phone booths I depicted had been permanently removed.
- 2007 *Going West: Selections from the Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts*, Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre Art Gallery, Medicine Hat.
- 2006-09 *Nightsapes*, Art Gallery of Alberta and other venues (an Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition).
- 2005 *exotique & favourite*, Agnes Bugera Gallery.
Painting Alberta: Three Decades of MFA Graduates in Painting from the University of Alberta, FAB Gallery (Digital component).

- 2004 *Four Painters*, Bugera Galleries, Edmonton.
- 2003 *Alberta Landscapes*, Alberta Union of Public Employees, Edmonton.
- 1997-03 *Spring and Fall Artwalk Exhibitions*, Bugera and Bugera/Kmet Galleries, Edmonton.
- 2002 *Three Men Who Paint: Dan Bagan, Tom Gale, Gordon Harper*, The Works Festival, Edmonton.
- 2001 *Rural Route*, Crowsnest Pass Allied Arts Association Gallery, Frank, Alberta.
- 2000 *Seven Men Who Paint*, The Works Festival, Edmonton.
Rural Route, McDougall Centre, Calgary.
- 1998 *Celebration*, Legislature Building, Edmonton.
Passage: Recent Acquisitions from the Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Beaver House, Edmonton.
- 1997 *Edmonton 2000*, Harcourt House Gallery, Edmonton.
Four Years On, Centre Gallery, Calgary.
Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba Fundraising Auction, Brandon. *Allied Arts Council Figurative Portrait Exhibition*, Lethbridge (juried).
- 1993 *BFA Grad Exhibition*, Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary.
A Slice of Life, University Theatre Mezzanine, Calgary.
- 1992 *Esperanto*, Little Gallery, Calgary.
- 1990 *Masterworks*, Medicine Hat College.
- 1989 *Art in the Park*, Rotary Park, Medicine Hat.

Representation and Collections

**peter
robertson
gallery**

Gordon Harper is represented by the Peter Robertson Gallery (12323-104 Avenue, Edmonton or www.probertsongallery.com). His work is in private collections, and in the collections of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Medicine Hat Museum & Art Gallery, and University of Alberta.