

The Paintings of Paolo Fortin

Ephemeral qualities of recollection, transience and isolation are the impetus for Paolo Fortin's paintings. Acts of separation and isolation in his creative process as well as in his daily life are initiated by the division of time and distance between Norman Wells, Northwest Territories and Peterborough, Ontario. The long commute between Fortin's remote western arctic and southern Canadian studios elicits contemplation on the processing of transitory images. Fleeting, passing moments cumulate in our head. To conger these memories, one must separate the blurred images. This requires speculation on the moment and how it truly existed. Unavoidably, our recollection is tainted by the struggle between the conscious and the unconscious mind. All of our experiences (consciously acknowledged or not) intrude and change memory. How did that event actually occur? We can never really know and ultimately have to accept our version as the closest proximity. The tangible world displaces and is replaced by insubstantial sensation and ambiguity. These paintings are seeped in the act of dilution. Photographs, from the route traveled, are used as source material but somehow there is always too much in their representational surfaces. Evidence clogs the route to essence so they must be reduced and disengaged from their reference. This is the only way that true experience can be offered to someone else for reflection. He condenses information through process and product. Thin veils of oil paint on minimally prepared supports examine instants of visual stimuli and balance the act of remembering with the act of experience. The tenuous point where the two dissolve and a new narrative emerges is the crux of journey. It is as much a revelation for the observer as it is a quest for the artist.

Bio

Born in the Kawartha Lakes region of Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, Paolo Fortin has lived and worked in Inuvik and Norman Wells, Northwest Territories in Canada's western arctic since 2004. After studying at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, Fortin concentrated on large scale sculptural constructions at Maine College of Art in Portland for his senior thesis. He spent a year in the MFA program at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax before relocating to Inuvik.

Often working with oil on canvas and paper, Fortin has also embraced adhesive vinyl, wool duffel and northern sewing techniques to articulate the visual residue that is experienced while travelling. Dividing his time between studios in Norman Wells, NT and Peterborough, ON., Fortin researches and develops his works in various locations. Recent projects were an outcome of his many visits to Norway, Iceland, Japan and the Caribbean. Since early 2008, Fortin has focused on creating thin, ephemeral paintings that build upon the experience of the arbitrary absorption of images in our daily lives. Individually, Fortin's paintings aim to speak to the viewer of the ethereal images and sentiment that surround our existence while addressing the fatigued and transitory moments of travel.

Fortin has participated in numerous national and international group exhibitions, including shows in Yellowknife (2010), Halifax (2004), Vancouver (2001), Bergen, Norway (2007) and Portland, Maine (1997). His solo exhibitions have been featured at the Ketilhus, Akureyri, Iceland (2008), CCA7, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (2006), the Showroom, Chicago (2001), and the ODD Gallery, Dawson City, Yukon (2007).

A recipient of a 2011 Art Bank Purchase Award by the Canada Council for the Arts, Fortin has also been awarded Canada Council and British Columbia Arts Council project grants (2002, 2005) and was the 2006 beneficiary of the Canada Council International Residency Program Award to work at CCA7 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. In 2007, he served as Artist-in-Residence at AIR Bergen at USF Verftet in Bergen, Norway and has twice been artist in residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts (2005, 2009) and the Gil Society Akureyri Artists Studios, Iceland (2007, 2008). Other residencies include The Carriage House, Islip, NY (2012), Spiro Arts, Park City, Utah (2012) and Can Serrat in El Bruc, Spain (2012)

Paolo Fortin maintains studios in Norman Wells, NT and Peterborough, ON. He is the owner and director of Evans Contemporary, a gallery dedicated to exhibiting internationally recognized artists in Peterborough. He produces electronic music for "Barcino Sants" a musical collaboration with vocalist/poet/playwright, Denise Kumani Gantt