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Red Head Gallery 25th anniversary

OPENING RECEPTION: Friday, December 11, 2015 / 6 – 9 p.m.

The Red Head Gallery celebrated their 25th anniversary on December 11th, with a group exhibition of former and current members showing their work side-by-side.



On the left wall: Margie Kelk (current member), Johannes Zits (former member) paired with Jack Butler (current member). In the corner: Millie Chen (former member) paired with Gillian Iles' sculpture (current member). Back wall: Ed Pien (former member) paired with Elaine Whittaker (current member). Photo: Teri Donovan

That's a number deserved of a big celebration whether it's in age or marriage but especially for something that marks Red Head as the longest standing artists' collective in Toronto. A well-deserved feat for a gallery that continues to bring artists, both established and emerging, together to produce work that starts a dialogue among artists and the community. Since the gallery's founding in 1990, more than 150 artists have contributed over 200 exhibitions by members as well as non-members.



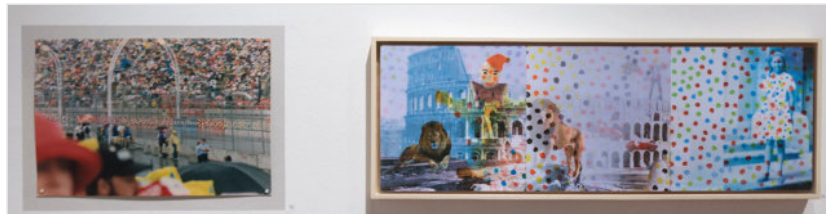
Current members from left to right: Nancy Anne McPhee, Tonia Di Risio, Peggy Taylor Reid, Mathew Borrett, Margie Kelk, Ian Mackay, Elaine Whittaker, Jack Butler, Teri Donovan, Gillian Iles, Ido Govrin, Christina Sealey, Sally Thurlow, Lynn Kelly. Photo: David Williams

The exhibition that the members came up with to commemorate the gallery's 25th birthday is spectacular. Artistic collaboration, an enduring principle of Red Head's collective, is the theme that connected current members with founding and early

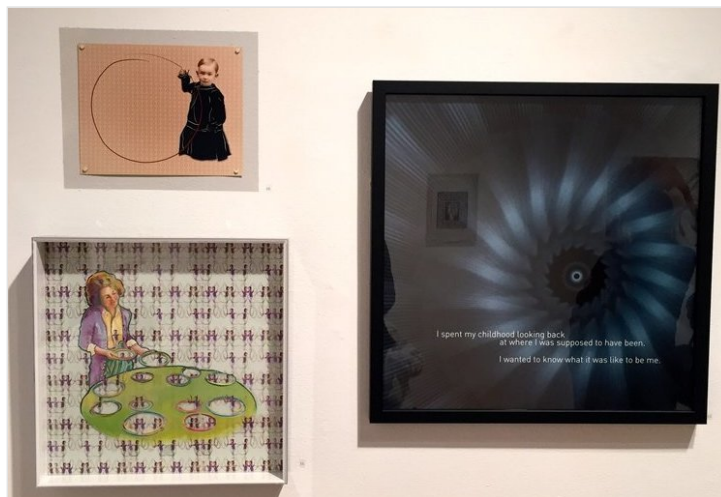
members. Current members were paired with prints either from a fundraiser in 1990 or from Red Head's 10th anniversary in 2000, of which they had to create a response. This intriguing discourse was given even more depth by some of the current member's work that was responded further to, from another founding member, making for a third speaker in this visual conversation. The works are exhibited in pairs and triplets, in fusion and tension between past and present. As a viewer I loved trying to understand the connection between old and new works.



Top: Lisa Neighbour (former member), bottom: Tonia Di Risio (current member). Photo: Teri Donovan



Left: Lorna Mills (former member), right: Gabrielle de Montmollin (current member). Photo: Teri Donovan



Top left: Sharon Switzer (former member), bottom left: Teri Donovan (current member), right: Sharon Switzer, a piece made in response to Teri Donovan's piece. Photo: Teri Donovan

This project unites individuals that similarly have been a part of the Red Head family but are separated by time. I can imagine it being a gratifying and humbling exercise for the creators of both the old and new pieces to see how the collective has developed. Though the pieces in the exhibition are made by numerous talented individuals, looking at them made me feel like I was watching the growth of the gallery. I was moved by the three generations of Red Head that came together to make this exhibition, looking fondly at each other's work. It is a celebration of how far the gallery and its many members have come.

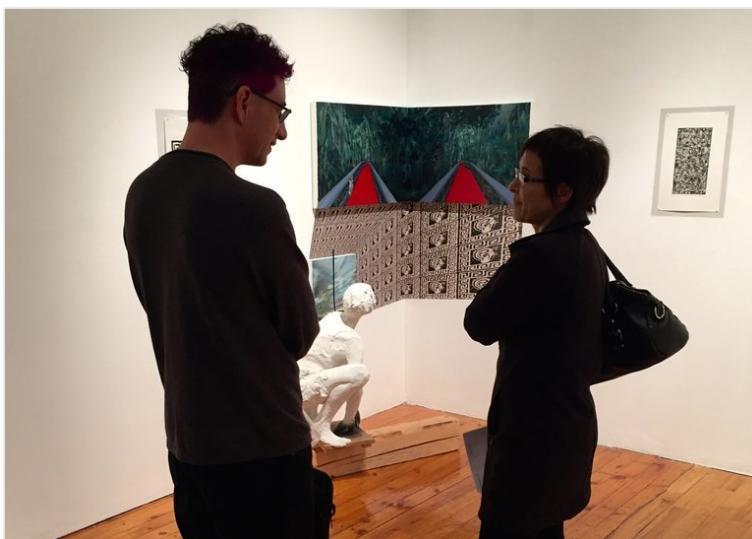


On the wall: Undoing by Sandra Gregson 1990 (former number), paired with Sally Thurlow's sculpture. Photo: Carter Brown



In front: Lynn Kelly's (current member) response to Janice Carbert's print (former member). Photo: Teri Donovan

What do the next 25 years look like? Teri Donovan, current member and the previous co-chair of the Red Head Gallery, tells me that the gallery's heritage of rigorously executed and critically engaged exhibitions within a supportive and collaborative environment will continue. As well, the collective plans on creating more opportunities for exchange between members and non-members to broaden and diversify their audience.



Guests with Millie Chen (former member) paired with Gillian Iles' sculpture (current member). Photo: Carter Brown

The anniversary reception was my second visit to the gallery and I loved the space just as much this time as the first. It feels intimate with low white walls that break up the space, though the exposed ceiling is quite high, and there is a charming and warm quality about the floorboards. It is not square in shape, which makes it enjoyable to follow the works around the walls as I made a few rounds during my stay. While the gallery of the founding members had a different location, Red Head's current home at 401 Richmond is a treat. Wander around the restored industrial building that is crawling with all people and things creative after your stop to check out how Red Head has been nurturing creativity for 25 years.



Guests at the opening reception. Photo: Carter Brown

Carter Brown

*Exhibition information: December 2, 2015 – January 16, 2016, The Red Head Gallery, 401 Richmond Street West, Toronto. Gallery hours: Wed – Sat, 12 – 5 p.m.