

Yours, Mine, and Yours

Amanda Rhodenizer's recent paintings explore the awkward pauses (empty lots, houses for sale, construction sites) in our national narrative of the majestic Canadian landscape. The works in "Parallel Play" were inspired by a contemporary phenomenon altering Canadians' relationships to domestic and outdoor spaces: the proliferation of short-term rentals offered through websites like Airbnb. In Rhodenizer's home province of Nova Scotia, tourist demand for "authentic" experiences are spurring more and more people to turn their family homes into seaside vacation rentals.

Rhodenizer's paintings hint at the tensions created by this new dynamic, as well as its echoes of European settlers' forays into Nova Scotia centuries ago. Her muted palette was influenced by *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History*, which artist C.W. Jeffreys published in three volumes from 1942 to 1950. Jeffreys copied many of his illustrations from other sources, and his images are unapologetically colonialist.

The Picture Gallery's disregard for the land's original inhabitants, while

problematic, is what inspired Rhodenizer in staging some of her scenes. The two young women renting the house in "Parallel Play" have also ventured into an unfamiliar environment, and the camera one carries in *Finding the Sun's Elevation* Above the Horizon is a subtle reference to settlers' complicated navigational tools in the prints Jeffreys compiled. While the middle-aged homeowner betrays no hostility toward her guests, viewers have to wonder what this woman — presumably a full-time resident who has lived through many lonely winters here — thinks of the Millennials tromping through her family home in their swimsuits, using it as a beach getaway.

Rhodenizer has carefully considered what such tourists are looking for, and how their determination to enjoy a view may make it less accessible. Even her apparent nature studies confound one's efforts to take in the landscape: They actually are depictions of land for sale on Nova Scotia's South Shore, too full of trees and telltale signs of development to be postcard-picturesque. A *Rare Find* (Bridgewater) and the other titles in this series, all quotes from



real-estate agents' websites, remind us these sites are commodities to be consumed — by a few.

The house in "Parallel Play," which is based on a real Nova Scotia vacation rental, likewise thwarts the visitors' expectations of ownership. The young travelers are separated from the beach and the woods by windows, doors, curtains, or metal railings, unable to experience these natural beauties directly. And, while Airbnb claims to offer more intimacy than a hotel, Rhodenizer's painting *Parallel Play* exposes the seaside rental as an abridged version of a house. The lack of personal items in this domestic space — along with its neutral sofa, beige carpet, and minimalist floor lamp — renders it almost inhospitable.

It's also hard to ignore the woman who owns the house, even if her visitors only spare her a glance in *Protective Covenants*. As the host hovers in the foreground of *Beach Front Modern*, our eyes are inexorably drawn to her crimson housecoat, the brightest thing in the scene.

As the exhibition title suggests, Rhodenizer's subjects avoid engag-

ing each other directly, even though they inhabit the same house. "Parallel Play" captures the disjunction between the seamless convenience promised by the sharing economy and the strain of the human interactions it engenders: the forced small talk, and the editing of one's personality to avoid disrupting the transaction.

The history of Canada continues in these paintings, though Rhodenizer's tourists are too busy looking for a Nova Scotia experience to realize they are part of the local industry being viewed. In acknowledging the realities of the sharing economy, "Parallel Play" presents a narrative with which we are not yet comfortable: Canadians are monetizing once-private spaces like their cars and homes, and technology is giving them new ways to explore a landscape whose ownership is still fraught.

— Lauren Weinberg

From top L to R: *A Rare Find* (Bridgewater), *Protective Covenants*, *Beach Front Modern*.