



AT THE GALLERIES

February 23, 2008

We're told **Douglas Kirton's** grand paintings of Chicago ("**See True**," ArtCore /Fabrice Marcolini gallery, 55 Mill St., Distillery District, Pure Spirits Bldg. 62, until March 16) are based on camera shots.

"The accuracy of the perspectives and the depth of focus are proof the images are sourced from photography," says Rick Nixon, a critic of the Waterloo-based artist's work who speaks with absolute finality about the subject.

If that's true, the facts are standing in the way of some terrific pieces of fiction. And these fictions go a whole lot further to explain how we look at his suite of autumnal urban images, big enough together to satisfy all of the extra space ArtCore offers them.

I see the paintings and I think of film – or at least how I remember certain scenes from certain films. *The Cadillac Palace Theatre in the Rain* (2007), pictured right, offers us a way into the filmmaking experience as thoroughly as anything painted by that most consummate of all film fans, the American artist Edward Hopper.

Kirton himself is a killer painter. These pieces can hold their own under the most technical scrutiny. (If that's the point of them.)

Besides, so what? What matters is the manner in which Kirton conjures up a unified sense of atmosphere out of all of his diaphanous painting. You don't want to go searching through all his glamorous murk for proof of an in-focus snapshot. You want to stand back and imagine how Raymond Chandler would see the same scene.

Like here we are across the street from this old Chicago burlesque on a bad day. (If it isn't raining in a Kirton painting, it's about to.) Nothing's happening – aside from rain, nothing much ever happens in a Kirton painting, either.

So why are we here? What are we waiting for?

Why is the wait such fun?

Peter Goddard