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Water the common element of artists' Gibson Gallery exhibit



By Joe Belanger, The London Free Press
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London-born artist Doug Kirton's Laurel Creek Derivation is part of a new exhibition at Michael Gibson Gallery on until March 26.

Two London artists, both graduates of Beal secondary school, are featured in a new exhibition at a downtown gallery.

Tom Benner's Ice Formations and Doug Kirton's Laurel Creek Derivations are at Michael Gibson Gallery until March 26.

Benner is revisiting a sculpture created in the mid-1970s when he had a three-part metal sculpture of icebergs at Forest City Gallery, which are now destroyed.

His artwork "explores the relationship between humans, animals and the environment" and the new work includes a large sculpture, Ice Formations, watercolours and cased-shrines "dedicated to marine animals," according to the gallery's associate director Jennie Kraehling.

Benner's work has been exhibited across North America including solo touring exhibitions, The Call of the Wild (2010-2014), Cruising the Margins (2002-2007), Tour of Bison (1998) and Tecumseh (1996).

His White Rhino, which adorns the front lawn of Museum London, is a well-known city landmark.

Kirton's exhibition is described as a "meditation" on Laurel Creek in Waterloo which the artist walks past on his way to teach painting, drawing and digital imaging at the University of Waterloo.

In a news release, the gallery said Kirton's works explore "the shifting light, atmosphere and changing colour. Kirton is not interested in documenting the landscape, rather he works from memory, his experiences and the process of painting."

"Through changing the colour or applying the paint in a different way for each of the derivations, Kirton conveys a strong sense of emotion to the place," said Kraehling.

"In a way, he is including us on his daily walk."

After graduating from Beal, Kirton earned a bachelor of fine arts from Nova Scotia College of Art and a master's from Guelph University.

In addition to extensive exhibitions across Canada, Kirton has participated in two-person and group exhibitions in the United States, Switzerland and China.

The work of both artists are included in major public and private collections.

IF YOU GO

What: Tom Benner's Ice Formations and Doug Kirton's Laurel Creek Derivations, presented by Michael Gibson Gallery.

Where: Michael Gibson Gallery, 157 Carling St.

When: Until March 26 with opening receptions for both artists Saturday, 2 p.m.