

Walking The Line by Gary Michael Dault #46: The Drill Factory

There is a hair-raising magic inherent in the concept of scale-change. Both Gaston Bachelard (*The Poetics of Space*, 1964) and Susan Stewart (*On Longing*, 1993) have written persuasively about the charm and the phenomenological engagement generated by the idea of the miniature.

Here is Bachelard, quoting Cyrano de Bergerac—I quote it because I find it irresistible—on “intimate immensity”: “This apple is a little universe in itself, the seed of which, being hotter than the other parts, gives out the conserving heat of its globe; and this germ, in my opinion, is the little sun of this little world, that warms and feeds the vegetative salt of his little mass” (p.151).

The true connoisseurship in miniature-ness may well belong to children whose unselfconsciousness, until the onset of puberty and its strictures, allows them the continual production of ravishingly beautiful drawings, paintings and sculptures (maybe “structures” is a better word if we’re thinking about tree-houses and snow-forts). It is during this hallowed eleven or twelve years, as well, that children exert, for their delectation, their prodigious abilities as scale-changers. What pre-pubescent girl cannot transform a doll-house into a full-size mansion at the flick of her shaping imagination? And what little boy, lying on his side on the carpet or on the grass, cannot instantly transform a toy car or truck, train or airplane (do boys still play with actual physical toys anymore or is everything digital/virtual?) into the real thing (in thus regard, by the way, it’s important to be lying stretched out beside the miniature object; if you’re standing over it looking down, the toy is automatically consigned to perpetual smallness—with you as its giant).

But children are not, obviously the only proprietors of scale-change; that gleeful prelude to creative enchantment rests also with artists, architects and other keepers of creative fervor.

The opposite of miniaturization is, of course, enlargement, and the coursing between them is a two-way street: it is a shock of pleasure to scale something up (the entire career of the senior American pop-artist, Claes Oldenberg, was based on his one perceptual operation). It is also creates a shock of pleasure to make something that is big in a small version—think of all those miniscule Eiffel Towers and CN Towers tourists find so compelling.

At any rate, small-to-big is a potent formula for perceptual re-presentation, and one of the most accomplished recourses of its transformational energies informs the immaculately imagined and accomplished exhibition called *Industrial Parkland* by Toronto-based artist David Trautrimas, now at Toronto’s Le Gallery.

What Trautrimas has done—to describe it makes it sound too easy—is to have selected certain rather worn, grubby, even abject household tools and appliances (power drills, a stapler, an old toaster, television parts, an old film projector, and so on) and, by photographing them in juxtaposition to, adjacent to photographically reduced images of automobiles, passing trains, and so on (there is a lot of photographic—that is to say, digital push-and-pull in Trautrimas’s work), to have generated entirely new and remarkably fresh “industrial” landscapes.

The new landscapes (there are eleven in the exhibition) are, more accurately, “factory-scapes”: the photographs have concisely descriptive titles like *The Television Factory*, *The Projector Factory*, *The Organ Factory*, *The Lamp Factory*, *The Stapler Factory*, *The Toaster Factory*, and *The Oscillating Fan Factory* (some of the titles carry the faint whiff of surrealism that is the almost inevitable by-product of the artist’s gleeful selecting of some delightfully unlikely objects to make into “factories”).

Trautrimas’s abject household objects naturally maintain their shapes when they are giganticized by his digitalization of them—but by that same giganticizing process, their shapes lose the meaning of the precision of their outlines as they are fitted into the artist’s aggregational positioning of them: a power drill—as in *The Drill Factory* reproduced here—is not as much a power drill now as it was at the beginning, before it was juxtaposed to other “factory” parts (including a second, symmetrically positioned power drill). Now, the individual tools have become elements of the hypothetical whole and take their place in complexity.

Note how cunning Trautrimas is in his fabricating of settings that lend his new scale-changed “buildings” believability: the most enchanting moment of *The Drill Factory* is surely not the big-little drills themselves, however delightfully re-contextualized, but rather the “convincing” truck, which having now digitally attained the scale of a toy truck, has backed in under the “factory.” The tree is a nice touch too—and the “driveway” at the left.