

THE JUNK HUNTER

DAVE TRAUTRIMAS' INDUSTRIAL PARKLAND

Words Jen Selk Photography Clint MacLean

Dave Trautrimas is adorable. This becomes obvious almost immediately after he enters the small café diner where we are scheduled to meet in Toronto. The 29-year-old artist, originally from Belleville, has got the flattered, eager-to-please manner of someone who's never been interviewed before (he admits as much). It's sweet, but it won't last. Trautrimas' work is as detailed and striking as that of some of the most popular visual artists working today and he isn't likely to remain in obscurity for long.

Titled *Industrial Parkland*, Trautrimas' most recent show opened at the LE Gallery in Toronto at the beginning of March. It features 11 large digital prints with names like *Power Drill Factory* and *Stapler Factory* all constructed in a way that Trautrimas describes as "kind of like hyper collage." Basically, he's taken everyday items like a fan, a lamp, and the aforementioned stapler and drill, meticulously dismantled them, photographed their individual parts, and then digitally manipulated those

photographs into new images that look like huge urban factories. Each factory is implied to produce massive quantities of the items they're made out of, get it?

I don't really get the "hyper" part of "hyper collage" so I ask Trautrimas explains that most people think of collage as work that combines disparate source images. "I'm doing a similar thing, but taking it to the next level by creating my own source images in a really controlled manner, and using them to create a collage that is much more seamless than a typical scissors and glue approach."

The show at LE Gallery is only Trautrimas' second solo exhibition, but he says he's already made a departure from his previous style. "I'd say a lot of the apparent humour is gone," he says, explaining that much of the work he completed before (some while he was a still a student of the Ontario College of Art and Design) was more "whimsical" and "leaning toward the old Monty Python work of Terry Gilliam." That influence is still vaguely apparent,



but *Industrial Parkland* is also definitely something different. It's more grown up, much like Trautrimas himself, more serious than you might expect, and extremely precise. Every review I've read so far manages to work in some reference to architecture in order to describe it.

Trautrimas worked for a good eight months on the project, holed up in his apartment in order to get it done on time (and still had to ask for an extension from the gallery). "There were definitely times that I was really stressed about the project," he says. "I can't speak for all artists, but I think there's always a healthy fear that the body of work you're creating has the potential to completely flop." Luckily, by the time Trautrimas and I spoke, favourable reviews of the show were already cropping up in local and national publications.

Trautrimas is pleased at the positive reception, and likely more than a little relieved. At the show's opening, he says one visitor stood in front of his *Automobile Factory* piece—the largest work in the show at 37" x 60"—for an extended period of time, and finally remarked that he could actually "hear it" operating. It's one of the nicest things anyone has said about his work, ever.

Personally, what I like best about *Industrial Parkland* is the retro styling of the items Trautrimas chose to work with. There's something particularly appealing about the patina of older items—the power of the blades used in *Oscillating Fan Factory* and the light amber of some of the ancient bulbs in *Lamp Factory*.

"I'm an obsessive junk hunter," Trautrimas admits, describing himself scouring local Value Villages and other second hand shops in order to find new materials to dissect. He even took apart his own car (an '88 Toyota dubbed "The dung beetle") to make a piece. Sometimes, he admits, he buys higher end items of the sort of Toronto antique stores that cater to the movie industry, and after dismantling and using them, will return them for a refund. He's obviously a little apologetic about it, but I'm complimentary. After all, he must be ridiculously handy, technically inclined and careful if he's able to mess with so many different mechanical and electrical systems without running them. "Not really," he says, smiling, and as ever, charmingly modest about the whole thing.

