

# Disappearing things



Photo by: Brooks Reynolds

► Rodman Hall's latest exhibition "Disappearing Things" is made up of just that; the gallery space is filled with things that are, in some way, disappearing. Photographs of melting snow that clings to branches, rolls of dryer lint, and a video of a building being demolished by a bulldozer are all pieces of a collection that demonstrates the dependability of time.

Toronto-based artist Gwen MacGregor's most recent body of work draws from several different mediums and reflects her fascination with time and how its passage "shapes small dramas or uncannily familiar situations". While the works may seem straightforward in relation to the exhibit's title when they are observed in isolation, they are not intended to be viewed as such.

"These are not meant to be viewed in isolation but in relation to the other elements in the room," said MacGregor. "Objects that are partially mouse-eaten, an animation of the plane going into the second tower of the World Trade Centre, the last can of tuna and salmon I will ever buy, a video of a building being destroyed by a bulldozer – these are brought together to build a rather melancholic vision. Perhaps those snow photos aren't so straightforward after all."

MacGregor customizes her installations to fit the space in which they will be exhibited. In the case of Rodman Hall, she was able to choose pieces that would complement its rich history and architectural details.

"In all my exhibitions I use the strategy of an installation artist. This means I never show separate objects but see everything as part of an integrated whole," she said. "I use a gathering process of mate-

rials to build the work. It doesn't matter if it is Jello or data from a GPS, I develop the work in the same way. The site where the elements are placed is also important to the final piece. In the case of Rodman Hall, the gallery spaces that are in the old house have a strong historical character. I chose images and materials that could work with the architectural details."

The theme of disappearing things is one that carries a strong relevance today, suggests MacGregor, in a world where the environment is deteriorating, trends come and go, and elements of our culture are ever-changing.

"I have a very process-oriented way of working," said MacGregor. "I began with several of the elements for this exhibition and saw that they all could be put under the umbrella of disappearing things. It's a theme that is open-ended, which I tend to like, and is very relevant currently. It is also something that can be related to close at hand, in the day to day, which I also like to work with."

A catalogue for the exhibition designed by Lewis Nicholson with text by Jacob Wren will be published this summer. MacGregor revealed an excerpt from the bookwork that she feels describes her work very well:

"Strange melting shapes out of snow that will certainly not be there the next morning, possibly suggesting future winters that will never quite suitably freeze. The colourful lint, rolled and scattered, suggesting the gradual disintegration of our clothing, as if we left our

## ART

## DISAPPEARING THINGS

by Gwen MacGregor  
@ Rodman Hall  
109 St. Paul Crescent  
St. Catharines  
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clothes in the dryer for long enough sooner or later there would be nothing left. Or the lint that speaks to the electricity that will someday [soon] no longer quite be at our fingertips, machines that might soon sit idle since we will no longer be able to afford to make them spin. Buildings falling down and being torn down by gradual attrition, human hand or historical event. All things, in one sense or another, disappearing."

MacGregor does not reveal too much about the meanings behind her installation – she prefers that viewers are inspired to reach their own conclusions through discussion and observation. Stepping back to allow her work to speak for itself, MacGregor opens up endless possibilities for her exhibition's interpretations.

"I am not interested in making work that prescribes to the viewer," said MacGregor. "Instead what I try to do is setup a situation that has some elements that are familiar and then hopefully provokes the viewer to consider new options. It could be that the viewer understands the work personally, or politically. All these responses are interesting to me. This may sound vague but this is because we are so used to being dictated to – what to buy, what to read, what to like and dislike, etc. One of the challenges of making art is to open up a discussion without dictating the outcome. It's only through this kind of process that real meaning can be made." P

[KRISTEN DE PALMA]