

KATHRYN
MARKEL

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FINE ARTS
EST. 1976



Simpson, Peter. "Landscapes as far as the eye can see: four shows in Market galleries", *Ottawa Citizen*. December 13, 2012.

"Ever charming, ever new, when will the landscape tire the view?"



That question was asked by Welsh painter and poet John Dyer in the early 1700s, which 300 years later makes the only sensible answer, "not any time soon."

The art-buying public has an infinite appetite for landscape paintings of all kinds, from the classicism of a Constable to the surrealism of a Miró to the hyperrealism of a Colville. The greatest landscapes satisfy by showing us familiar settings in ways we've not seen them before, perhaps glorious or perhaps mysterious and always, somehow, wondrous.

Ottawa's ByWard Market is, this month, awash in landscapes, with exhibitions under way in several commercial galleries. Seen together in a single afternoon — easily accomplished, as they're all within a few blocks of each other — they make for a worthy tour.

At Galerie St-Laurent + Hill (293 Dalhousie), Montreal artist Peter Hoffer has an untitled show built on muted, empty landscapes. This is what Andrew Wyeth called "the bone structure" of the land, a timeless map of what lies beneath.



Winslow, 2012

Hoffer's landscapes are not so bleak, but they have a grey hardness that projects a grand, vast, transcendent solitude. In the painting *Winslow* — I fancy that's an allusion to Winslow Homer, whose deep, dark greens are seen here — a lone hardwood stands beneath a mighty sky of rough clouds and yellow-ish blue. The

upper corners of the panel are unfinished, just bare wood, portending a change, exposing a vulnerability even in these rocks and rugged greenery.

Each of the landscapes in Hoffer's show are portraits of solitary evergreens, and each contrasts this distressed, unfinished state with a thick, glossy coat of resin over the top. They are profound works, from an artist with a clear vision. Hoffer's exhibition continues at Galerie St-Laurent + Hill to Dec. 19.