

A HALF HOUR OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING



Opening Reception: Saturday 15 May 2010 @ 7pm Gary Michael Dault (Napanee, ON) presents a suite of thirty of his one-minute cereal box landscape paintings. He accomplishes each of his landscape paintings as he describes them, in one minute, using cereal box card stock as support, surface, and inspiration. Gary Michael Dault is a writer, critic and visual artist. Author or co-author of a number of books of criticism and poetry, his writings have appeared in many Canadian magazines and newspapers (his art-review column, "Gallery-Going," ran in *The Globe & Mail* for the past fourteen years). He has mounted numerous exhibitions of his work, the most recent being a double exhibition, *Landscapes and Fragments* and *Pictures of Diderot*, both at Toronto's Index G this past winter.

Artist's Statement

ON THE MAKING OF ONE-MINUTE CEREAL BOX LANDSCAPES It struck me, one morning, a half dozen years ago, while waiting for my then teenage son to come down to breakfast, that the bowls of cereal shown on cereal boxes looked rather landscape-like, and could probably be easily assisted into becoming convincing, if possibly parodic, landscape paintings. To that end, I began to cut out the front panels of the empty boxes and, with a brush heavily loaded with acrylic, swipe a quick horizon of sea across the bottoms of the cereal piles, and rapidly swirl in some sky overhead. The results surprised me. These painting actions did indeed generate landscapes—quite remarkably convincing ones, I felt, though they were inevitably generic landscapes, vaguely reminiscent of somewhere or other (some evoked the prairies, others were inescapably, archetypally maritime) and were never paintings of any particular place. Much of what interested me about them had to do with their no-fail qualities: it seemed quite impossible to make a really bad one. And, curiously, the faster I made them, the better they always were. None of them ever took more than a minute to make (most took less). Making them was the next best thing to being in a sort of preconscious, procedural trance, a state of unknowing that inevitably precluded any of my much-practiced critical faculties cutting in and prompting me to try to do better—or more.

My dear, and, alas, now late friend, painter Gerald Ferguson wrote in *Canadian Art* magazine in 2007 about an exhibition of the paintings I had at Gallery Page & Strange in Halifax that year: "*His show of paintings at Gallery Page and Strange in Halifax,*" Ferguson wrote, "is not what you might expect from the title of the exhibition: An Hour's Worth of Landscape Painting: Sixty 1-Minute Paintings on Cereal Boxes. It's true that the support for the paintings is cerealbox card stock, echoing the Group of Seven's use of bookbinding card stock. And as in the Group's works (1), bits of ground show through enhancing the surface and colour. But in Dault's work, it is not just that remnants of the cereal box show through; the design on the box also determines the composition. Again recalling the Group of Seven, these are luscious landscape paintings: a pile of Cheerios forms a hill, a blueberry becomes a moon

and milk in a bowl is now water. Yes, Dault limited himself to one minute to complete each painting, following the American Ashcan School painter Robert Henri's dictum: "Do it all in one sitting if you can. In one minute if you can." Dault turns Henri on his ear by doing an entire show in an hour! Someone asked Dault how paintings completed in just one minute could have any substance. His reply: 'It took me 30 years to learn to paint them.' The art-historical referencing does not stop there. The cereal-box paintings are also serial paintings. This is not just a clever homonym. Warhol used repeated or serialized images to make paintings, but Dault does Warhol one better by serializing an entire exhibition. The establishment of strict parameters (format and time) forces the artist to be inventive. Creativity only comes with limits; as Sartre said, we are otherwise 'condemned to freedom.' 1) It has always amused me, in working on these paintings, to recall the hostile critics who first attacked the Group's work, calling it "the hot mush school of painting."

Gary Michael Dault Napanee, Ontario April 30, 2010