

New Westminster Photographers – Perspectives on the Familiar

Visual Description

This is a joint exhibit by the New Westminster Photography Club with 17 pieces of photography by ten different photographers. The photos are mostly hung 2 to a panel and are matted in white with thin black frames (except where noted). The theme of the show is the City of New Westminster, and the images presented were all taken in the city. Many are recognizable locations but require us to use the photographer's perspective to see something familiar with fresh eyes. Some works are more abstract than others. There are four double sided panels, covered with a light grey linen, stacked in a line, running north-south. The panel faces also point north-south. The panels are numbered 1 through 8, with 1 being the northernmost panel, 2 being the south facing panel on the rear side of panel 1, and so on, through panel 8 being the southernmost panel. I will describe five of the works.

The New Westminster Photography Club is a collective of about 50 amateur photographers. Members have a range of backgrounds and knowledge, from new photographers to those with considerable experience and recognition.

Ten photographers from the Club—Peter Eisenbock, Quinton Friesen, Geoffrey Griffiths, Paul Larose, Glenn Marcus, Nancy Matheson, Debra Nelson, Paul Newton, Deanna Thorson and Harry Traeger—invite you to see their beloved city with fresh eyes.

The theme was broad: the City of New Westminster. Yet each photographer honed in on a particular aspect of the city using their own, unique artistic sensibilities and photographic skills to create this diverse show.

Their photographs capture the familiar and the not so familiar. Some use photographic techniques, such as ICM—intentional camera movement—to render a local scene into an abstract. The nighthawks, either alone or with the club's special interest group Night Vision, capture the city in this less photographed time of day. Not surprisingly the Fraser River and its environs is a favourite subject with many, as it continues its transformation from an industrial site into riverside park where the working river can still be seen. Some of the photos may challenge what you think of when you think of New Westminster, others may make you smile and nod, softly saying to yourself, "Yes, that's New West".

Panel 1 – Rooms – Encouraging Development by Glenn Marcus (10" x 13")

This photograph is a bit of a timeline of downtown development in New Westminster. In the foreground is a well-preserved low-rise building on the corner of a steep street. There are black window frames and a black awning over the first floor window on the corner, and black trim at the edge of the flat roof. The walls are brick and are painted a tan. Beside this building and rising above it in our sight line is another early 20th century brick building, but not painted so neatly nor looking so tidy as the first building. However, we can see the side wall of third and fourth floors which had a painted advertisement on it. Although the colour of the natural brick shows through, there are some traces of an old Coca Cola logo,

but the only thing we can read clearly is ROOMS in block letters, white with a black background. Behind both these buildings is a new development, mostly glass, with small balconies and stacked columns of identical windows. It rises above both the older buildings. The strong lines of the building in the foreground, and the angle that all the buildings sit on as we face their corner views is striking.

Panel 2 – Tug Bumpers by Peter Eisenbock (13” x 10”)

This image is a closeup of a row of tires fastened to the side of a tug boat and used as bumpers for the boat. There are six tires that stretch across the centre of the photo in a slightly curved line. The eye perceives them as black (recognizing they are tires) but they also have many highlights of blue, white and red or orange in them. They are affixed to the side of the boat with white rope which attaches to cleats in the gunwale. The white rope passes through holes drilled in the sides of the tires, so a rope passes from each tire side to the cleat and back to the other tire side, making a strong pointed shape atop each tire. Beneath the tires is a similar arrangement, but the ropes are slack and are also in shadow, so don't have the same graphic effect. The gunwale of the boat is a bright blue, with some rust streaks. The roping arrangement continues up the line of the gunwale although we can't see any more tires. On the other side of the gunwale, inside the boat, are more rust-streaked metal fixtures, this time in metal colour and yellow. Beneath the tires, the hull of the boat is streaked with more rust and different colours on a base of blue. There are also some larger rust patches. We see a glimpse of the river water in the bottom left corner of the photo. The graphic elements of the tires and ropes take the eye across the picture, and the symmetry of the line of tires is a pleasing arrangement.

Panel 5 – Arundel Mansions Hotel by Paul Newton (13” x 10”)

This night scene shows a building from across a street. In the foreground is the street, which is sloped down to the left. The street is wet and reflects the lights from the building. The building is an early 20th century style apartment building, with a storefront entrance and bow windows on the residences on the second floor. The storefront entrance has a large transom which is circled by decorative coloured lights. Some of the bulbs are burnt out. The number 46 is on the glass door, and to the right of the door, a metal grate is open. Through the window on the left of the door, we can see a bright but welcoming light, with a few tables with white tablecloths, many pieces of art on the wall, and two extinguished TVs hung high on facing walls. The gold lettering on this large window reads Arundel Mansions Hotel. Through the glass door we can see some dilapidated armchairs. In the same building there is also a door at number 48 behind which we can see some stairs. The buildings on either side are dark and the street is very dark except for the reflected coloured lights.

Panel 5 – River Waltz by Paul Larose (13”x 10”)

This photograph shows three tugboats out on the river in close proximity to one another. On the left there is a boat with red in the middle of its cabin, and the name KEN MACKENZIE across the bow and on the top of the cabin (which is white above the red section). The bow of the boat is facing toward the middle of the photograph. There are five tires of graduated sizes underneath the name of the boat on the bow. We can clearly see the captain of the boat in the wheelhouse, a life ring on the outside wall, large bottles of water on the deck and lights and radar equipment on the roof. On the right of the photo are two tugs, facing toward the red tug. They are yellow where the first is red, but also have white on

the upper cabins and black hulls. The names we can see on the bows are Marken 6 and Marken 5. These two boats have Canadian flags flying above their wheelhouses, which are also adorned with radar equipment, lights and boat paraphernalia. There is one yellow boat lower than the red boat and one higher, so it looks like the red boat will pass between the two yellow boats. Further away behind the main boats is a smaller boat (not a tug) in red and yellow. The boats are bright and vivid, and the sunlight has blown almost all the colour out of the water on the river. Beyond, on the far shore we can see a faint, light-green section which is the land and trees on the other side. The image is full of live and movement.

Panel 6 – Bicycle Rack by Geoffrey Griffiths (9" x 7")

This black and white photograph of a bike rack down by the river is purposely blurred outside the very centre of the image. The bike rack is a line of 12 overlapping circles which are reflected in the wet ground to make two lines of overlapping circles. Beyond the rack is the guardrail with rectangular divisions. Beyond the rail is the Fraser River and we can see the Skytrain Bridge, the Pattullo Bridge and the train bridge in the background, though they are quite blurry. The large triangular shape of the Skytrain Bridge is also reflected in the wet ground by the bike rack. The blurry quality and the wet ground, as well as the heaviness of the grey tone invokes a very rainy and dark day. The clarity and focus of the small-scale racks at the very centre of the image contrasts with the blurred large scale bridges in the background. But there are geometric shapes in all aspects of the photograph make a wonderful constant in this photo of contrasts. This piece is smaller than most of the other pieces in the show and has a creamy mat with a silver frame.