

GALLERY GOING

She even gets the mouths right

By GARY MICHAEL DAULT
Saturday, October 15, 2005 Page R11

Susan G. Scott at Drabinsky Gallery

\$1,800-\$7,000. Until Oct. 29, 122
Scollard St., Toronto; 416-324-5766



The great American society painter John Singer Sargent once defined the portrait as a painting in which there was always something wrong with the mouth. I think Sargent would have liked Susan G. Scott's work, though. With her exhibition *Fabula*, now at Toronto's Drabinsky Gallery, there is scarcely anything wrong with any of the mouths -- nor with any other part of the faces of the children who populate many of the Montreal-based artist's big, lushly painted pictures.

At first glance, you imagine there's only the face of the child, isolated on a large, brushy ground, and often positioned low and in the foreground. When you look again, you notice the background supports all kinds of activity: In *Hercules*, a red-hued boy is surrounded by white drawings of hectic charioteers -- frantic action figures looming out of the background as if they were figments of the child's teeming imagination.

Advertisements

Similarly, in *The Eagle*, a winsome girl painted with light blues and creams looks into a middle distance of her own devising while two persuasively drawn eagles fly past in a romantic rush of wings against a royal-blue background. Sometimes these exquisitely painted children are supported by figures less mythic than eagles or heroes. The wan, pinkish boy pinioned against a livid green background in *Pogo Stick Contest* is surrounded by four figures hopping on . . . well, on pogo sticks. What these children don't say, as the press release puts it, "is riveting."

But much of Scott's exhibition consists of exquisitely made watercolours on paper. These are the *Fabula* works that lend the show its title. Drawing from the resources of art history, Scott somehow succeeds in making watercolours that are as rich and layered and lavish as her paintings on canvas.

GLOBE AND MAIL SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2005

Canada's National Newspaper

© Copyright 2005 Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.