



A NEW 'REALITY'... Curator Liane Davison "talks" to *Voice of Fire 2006*, a chat room avatar, at Surrey Art Gallery. The electronic device is part of the *Fiction Non Fiction* exhibit at the gallery until Nov. 5.

PHOTO/Brian Howell

What's real, what's fiction?

SURREY ART GALLERY / A new exhibit explores our perceptions of reality

With the rapid advances in technology and the popularity and proliferation of "reality" shows on television — which pervert the very concept they profess to capture — the lines between the real and the fake are blurring.

Fiction Non Fiction, an exhibit at the Surrey Art Gallery, explores our perceptions of reality.

Although we grasp the separation between the real world and its reflected images, curator Liane Davison explains, we are so saturated with images trying to persuade us to believe and behave in particular ways that our ability to distinguish between the two is becoming increasingly obscured.

Davison says the works in the exhibit force the viewer to question what she is actually seeing "and what happens when you discover it's not quite what you think it is."

The exhibit features the work of six artists.

Artist David Carter explores the dark side.

Carter, an avid movie goer, is interested in the genre of horror movies.

Pseudocide is a self portrait inspired by a scene in the 1989 black comedy, *The Heathers*.

The work features the startling image of the life-sized figure of the artist, hanging. Adding to the drama is fact

that viewers must turn a corner and enter another room within the gallery before being confronted with the disturbing image upon a stark black wall.

The second photograph, only visible to the gallery viewer when they turn around, faces from behind, exposing the artist shows all the apparatus used to create the illusion of the artist hanging.

Carter says his inspiration for the piece came from several sources, one being the deeply personal experience of discovering the body of someone who had committed suicide.

Other references, he says, come from the movie. "A scene in the movie depicts Wynona Rider pulling off a fake suicide with a bed sheet tied around her chest to convince her boyfriend of her death. She does this out of spite. Spite plays a big role in not only cases of suicide, but also of this work," he says.

"Other influences would be that of classical painting, and the representations of death and the passing on into the after life."

Carter says he wanted the photo to have an illusory quality.

"I wanted the portrait to have an illusionistic look to it, as if I was performing a levitation or trick. Deception. In the opposite photo, where the trick is revealed I used apparatus that can be purchased at any hardware retail outlet," he says.

"I wanted it to have a really do-it-yourself feeling about it. Referencing shows such as *Fear Factor*, and other current 'reality'-based television shows, giving it the opposite feeling of the classical techniques depicted in the first photo."

The photo also features a perfectly placed Eames chair in one corner, looking strangely undisturbed by the final moments of violence.

Carter says the significance of the Eames chair lies purely in the way someone considers the way in which they will be found.

"This chair could be seen as very tongue in cheek. Almost every artist knows what an Eames chair is, much less own one. It is a recognizable commodity that has a certain amount of cachet attached to it. I thought it made for a great product shot right at the bottom of the photo," he says.

Despite its obvious shock value, Davison notes *Pseudocide* has a slick billboard quality.

Adad Hannah's three digital videos appear to be photographs. But if the view lingers longer, it becomes evident the works are videos and the figures are slowly moving and breathing in a way that has a dreamy quality.

The three videos, titled *Tribute*, *Guided* and *crying*, were filmed in 2002 at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and are from a series of silent videos collectively titled *Skills*.

Fiction Non Fiction also includes Jeremy Turner's *Voice of Fire 2006*, a chat room avatar. The works' form and colour parodies a famous painting named *Voice of Fire* by Barnett Newman (remember the three bold stripes?) owned by the National Gallery of Ottawa. The monumental abstract caused a huge national furor when it was learned that the painting cost \$2 million.

Fiction Non Fiction runs at the Surrey Art Gallery until Nov. 5.