

## Lightning strikes twice: Melanie Authier at Georgia Scherman

By: Murray Whyte. Posted: December 13, 2010



Have a mentioned **Melanie Authier**? Oh, right, I did. Once, in passing. Maybe I wasn't sure a 29-year old painter was going to stick around. I'm glad to admit I'm wrong. Now a well-seasoned 30, **Authier** confirms the promise of her first show at **Georgia Scherman** last year with a bracing, robust suite of canvases that made me see abstraction at least a little afresh. Last year, **Authier** showed work next to such icons as Jack Bush, Harold Town and Joan Mitchell -- helpful references, I suppose, for a painter, like many, who tends to paint about painting -- but here she's in solo flight, and my feeling is she's much the better for it. It's almost like the training wheels have come off, and **Authier's** robust abstraction has a flirtatious, liberating glee.

While it's tipped heavily in the direction of the abstract, her terrain is an enigmatic borderland between that central concern and a vibrantly muddy representation, to my eye, of extreme fantasy landscapes that would have done Tolkien proud. The piece above is my favourite: A sort of wild earthiness that baits you into see something firmly terrestrial -- mountain? cliff? the Shire? -- but with precisely no resolution, and that irreconcilable tension is maybe it's central deletability (it helps that it's rawly gorgeous, too).

**Authier** leavens her abstract exuberance with perspectival techniques -- she inserts orthagonal forms or distinct, ribbon-like whorls, holistically painted into her tableaux, fiddling with your eye to create depth in the non-pictorial plane -- that keeps you off-balance, but most importantly, planted in the picture, in a captivating visual quest. Fun stuff. What will 31 bring?

**Melanie Authier, The Ribbon and the Lightning Rod**, continues at **Georgia Scherman Projects**, 133 Tecumseth, to Dec. 22.

Image Caption: **Melanie Authier, Dead Letter Emblem**, 2010, 60 x 50 inches, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of **Georgia Scherman Projects, Inc.** Toronto, Canada.

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