

WILDING CRAN GALLERY

Martin Bennett

When I Can No Longer Fall In Love For The First Time

November 19, 2016 – January 7, 2017



Wilding Cran Gallery is pleased to present *When I Can No Longer Fall In Love For The First Time*, an exhibition of new work by Canadian artist Martin Bennett. On view November 19 through January 7, this project-based series of paintings offers a glimpse into Bennett's collected insights of his family history and an exploration within the human tradition of doubt.

The exhibition delves into the inherited story of his great grandmother Nellie Taylor's last words-- in lieu of Bennett's great grandfather she had cried out for Augustus John, the celebrated British painter of the early 1900s. Nellie's final words imparted a deep uncertainty about her daughter's true father. Since she had worked as a housekeeper and cook for the painter William Holman-Hunt, it was likely that she would have crossed paths with Augustus John. This exhibition features snapshots from Bennett's travels to August John's home in Hampstead, England. With each new trip came an opportunity to view scenes wherein his own ancestry became perplexed.

The paintings are the products of photographs taken by Bennett on his travels, each work acts as a link to the greater story. The works are born of two dates, one marking the painting's completion and the other noting its photographic counterpart; an homage to process and inception. Each painting is further

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removed from the original date of the photograph as Bennett sands their surfaces, ensuring an image both resolutely familiar while also distant in its final form. He is the mediator, both as artist's hand and willful spectator to a developing onslaught of clues.

Aesthetically, two unifying elements bind the works - firstly their black and white palette, and secondly Bennett's finishing process of electrically sanding the surface of the painting to give the works a distinct, stripped back texture. He is the mechanism both producing and skewing the image. The black and white paintings are together a history for Bennett, memorializing the faint certainties of a developing case.

About Martin Bennett

Martin Bennett was born in Winchester, United Kingdom and is based in Saskatoon, Canada. Bennett's current practice revolves around three ongoing series that he began in the mid-nineties and include: Grey Volume Paintings, Variant Flash Paintings and Static Image Paintings. The Grey Volume Paintings are monochromatic canvases that he began producing in 1995, the Variant Flash Paintings are gestural compositions initiated in 1996, and Static Image Paintings are image-based paintings that he started making in 1999. All three components are represented in *When I Can No Longer Fall In Love For The First Time*.

He incorporates photography, digital manipulation, and traditional painting techniques, and typically feature flat, geometric planes of various colors. Each work is based on a photograph taken by Bennett during trips to Europe and Canada, which he then digitally reduces into black-and-white renderings and projects onto canvas, ultimately using the image as the basis for a painting. As a final step, Bennett sands down the surface of his painting such that the weave of the canvas becomes visible, creating a layered, textured effect.

Bennett's work has been vastly displayed across Canada, in both solo and group exhibitions. Participating in exhibitions since the early nineties, his work has most recently been shown at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery (Toronto), Clint Roenisch Gallery (Toronto), Glenbow Museum (Calgary), The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre (Medicine Hat), and Mendel Art Gallery (Saskatoon). His work may also be viewed in such permanent collections as The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (Alberta), Canadiana Fund (Ottawa), University of Lethbridge Art Gallery (Alberta), and many other galleries, museums, and libraries throughout Canada.