



# The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

*Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper*

## Alan Glicksman

Black & White Abstracts

*Finding Unfamiliar Ways of Approaching Familiar Subjects*

September 8 - October 5, 2007

Commentaries by John Bentley Mays & Julie Oakes

Artist Catalog, 'Black & White Abstracts - Alan Glicksman'  
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Commentary by Julie Oakes  
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## Alan Glicksman - Abstracts

Some time in 1991, while living near the village of Flesherton, Ontario, the painter Alan Glicksman briefly abandoned his usual practice of high-spirited figuration and made the 17 mostly abstract works on paper in this exhibition. (Only once or twice do menacing, mask-like faces emerge from the turmoil of paintwork: visions of the enemy; otherwise the lines fly free of gravity and reference.) Having finished this series, he resumed the prolific creation of fantastic animals and spirits, icons of the naked and free, for which he is better known.

We would love to know the circumstances of this unusual departure, and the motives that prompted it. But Alan recalls nothing special about the episode. So there is an element of mystery here, one made intriguing by the power of these rapid, expressive paintings, their dense abstract narrative, which seem to emerge abruptly from nowhere and flourish on the page.

I have no intention of violating the mystery surrounding the origin of these works by speculating about the special circumstances that occasioned them. In any case, what matters about them is not what they mean, but what they are, as sites of freedom and risk, and of creative dialogue with the complex history of abstract painting.

Looking at these pictures from 1991, as so often when viewing Alan's work, anyone familiar with Abstract Expressionism will recall certain New York canvases made early in that episode, during the vexed 1930s and the war years. The presence of Jackson Pollock (when he was still an easel painter) is here, in the congested surge and striving of Alan's line. There is something of Arshile Gorky's exuberant marking and scoring of the 1940s, but without his sensuous lyricism; and there is much of Adolph Gottlieb's dense layering and iconic framing.

But the hands of these artists (and others of their generation) lie very lightly on Alan's painting, which remains, throughout this series, very much his own. Largely dispensing with the human and animal figures who dance and twist elsewhere in his art, he gives us only the choreography, the fugitive trace, of their revels.

The dance noted in these 17 paintings is urgent, as always in Alan's art. It is a matter of life and death, of resistance to death--especially the spiritual death that comes to the soul that stops resisting, and surrenders to the world's systematic unfreedom. These are not political works--at least not in the conventional sense--though they call into question our individual positions within the body politic. Have we renounced death with all the energy represented in these paintings? Have we slid into compromise (as Alan's paintings and practice have not) with enemies of the creative spirit in our time: literalism, ideology, the heartless conformity of consumerism?

Painting cannot heal the spiritual ills of the age. But it can and does nourish moral consciousness, by introducing into our lives concrete examples of what is possible for the free mind. These works are instances of such liberty, and invitations to larger life.

John Bentley Mays



Face East To Pray - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



The Heavenly Host - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



It Is Written - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Man Is Frail - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



The Elders And The Scholars - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



The Protection Of The People - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



According To The Book - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



It Was Not Unusual - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Innocent Talk - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Who Is To Perish - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



For The Strangers - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Who Shall Be Taken - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Treasures Of The Temple - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Mystic Idea - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Refusal To Follow - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



The First Occasion - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991



Rules In Construction - 40 x 26 inches - acrylic on paper - 1991

## Alan Glicksman - A Higher Necessity

Modern living, socialization and institutions have us traversing certain pathways that often leave no time or inclination for individual exploration. The role of the avant-garde, however, is to push towards the boundaries and at the limits of the constraints a choice must be made - to break on through to the other side or to hold back and participate in the quotidian realm. Kant proposed that the only way to find the individual voice was to become liberated from the expectations of our culture. He proposes that fine arts is a path that leads to liberation and freedom. Art is a way to bring about an actual picture of free thoughts and grant them a graspable body. The expressive individual crosses the borders, explores the limits and yet retains sanity.

This is the place revealed in Alan Glicksman's work. It is a space of absolute liberation, bound only by the medium of paint on paper and made clear through the black and white palette that he has chosen to use. The marks can be associated to automatic writing. A visual message coming through from the other side, from the inside of man, from his head, motivated by his heart and vested a committed place in the pantheon of things. It is the unknowable realized. There is evidence of the artist, the trail left by the energy of his marks, born of a necessity to create and an educated perspective of choices from which to begin this journey into freedom. The result is specifically and uniquely individual. The marks have been made and there is no recourse, no turning back the wheels of time and playing that commitment to paper backwards so that it wipes clean. The painting becomes the inaccessible, unfettered state of freedom that can only be realized in the work, like the way that grapes ferment to become wine, a zymurgy that changes the docile grape into an intoxicating drink, able to open and yet also confuse the mind.

Abstraction worked in one way for the artist as he made the piece, bringing to it the vast combination of experiences and knowledge that are brought to play during the process of creating. Then the viewer is set on another journey when confronted by the work, one that has the attributes of the viewer's individuality associated with it.

In a body of work such as this, a series where the similarities between pieces are as great as the differences, how does one choose? There is an array of memories, recognition, attractions and disturbances that trigger synapse. Veering towards one over another has little to do with Alan Glicksman. Or does it? Perhaps that which attracts the viewer to the piece is in sync with the impetus that brought it about. The bleed through from the artists's consciousness, a kind of quantum transportation, is made physical.

Glicksman has his "higher necessity", his particular path that will set him free. The paths between artist and viewer meet in an extreme present that contains emotional elements in common and something equally coalescent - a work of art..

Julie Oakes

## Alan Glicksman

Born Toronto, Canada, 1954

### EDUCATION:

1979 AOCA, Ontario College of Art, Toronto, ON & New York, NY  
1979 B.A., Fine Art, University of Guelph, ON  
1991 Diploma-Child Study, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto

### AWARDS:

2007 Project Grant, Ontario Arts Council  
2007 Exhibition Assistance, Ontario Arts Council  
1989 Exhibition Assistance, Ontario Arts Council  
1989 Exhibition Assistance, Visual Arts Ontario  
1987/86/83 Materials Assistance Grant, Ontario Arts Council  
1984 "B" Grant, Canada Council  
1983 Project Grant, Canada Council  
1983 "B" Grant, Canada Council  
1978 Royal Bank Artventure First Prize

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2007 Lehmann Leskiw Fine Art, Toronto, ON  
2006 *Friends of Mine*, Flesherton Art Gallery, Flesherton, ON  
2005 *Big Nameless Oil Paintings*, Engine Gallery, Toronto, ON  
2002 *Ruff Stuff Sculpture*, Parts Gallery, Toronto, ON  
1999/02 *Painting/Sculpture*, Drumsnab Gallery, Toronto, ON  
1997 *Shelborne Work*, Galerie Glix Toronto, ON  
1996 *Burlington Work*, Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1996 *Recent Work*, Durham Art Gallery Durham, ON  
1989 *McKellar Work*, Pearl Street Gallery Hamilton, ON  
1989 *Reflective Instincts*, Kozak Gallery Toronto, ON  
1987 *Eight-Year Survey*, Durham Art Gallery Durham, ON  
1986 *Flesherton Work*, Grunwald Gallery Toronto, ON  
1984 *Stewart St. Work*, Gallery 620 Toronto, ON  
1982 *New York Work*, Lacemaker Gallery Toronto, ON  
1981 *Soap Box Series*, Lacemaker Gallery Toronto, ON  
1980 *Alan Glicksman*, Bank of Montreal Toronto, ON  
1978 *No-Name Show*, Gallery 76, Toronto, ON

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2008 *Circolo Culturale Il Gabbiano*, Museo Nuova Era, Bari, Italy  
2007 *Abstract I (B&W)*, Headbones Gallery, The Drawers, Toronto, ON  
2007 *Circolo Culturale Il Gabbiano*, La Spezia, and Studio Gennai, Pisa, Italy  
2007 *The Better it Gets*, Lehmann Leskiw Fine Art, Toronto, ON  
2006 Lonsdale Gallery, *Forest Thru The Trees*, Toronto, ON  
2006 *Manifold Project OCAD*, Nuit Blanche, Toronto ON  
2006 Headbones Gallery, *Beauty and Obsession*, Toronto, ON  
2006 Art Gallery of Ontario, *In Your Face*, Toronto, ON  
2006 Double Door Gallery, *Self-Portraits*, Anten Mills, ON  
2006 *Now-Now*, Fran Hill Gallery, Toronto, ON  
2005 *One Hundred Squares*, Tom Thomson Gallery, Owen Sound, ON  
2004-05 *XXXmas Show*, Engine Gallery, Toronto, ON  
2002-06 *Whodunit?* OCAD Mystery Art Sale OCAD Toronto, ON  
2002 *Sculpture/works on paper*. Parts Gallery, Toronto, ON  
2002 *Paintings*, Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
2001 Denison Gallery Toronto, ON  
2001 *100 Dollar Show*, Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
2000 *Moose in the City*, Yonge & Bloor Toronto, ON  
1999 Ashkenaz Festival, Harborfront Toronto, ON  
1998 *Art Rental & Sales*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON  
1997 Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1996 Gallery Moos Toronto, ON  
1996 *Canadian Artists*, Japanese Cultural Centre Toronto, ON  
1996 Partisan Gallery Toronto, ON  
1995 Anshan Gallery Toronto, ON  
1994 Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1993 *Gallery Artists*, Gallery Moos Toronto, ON  
1993 *Milestone Marker*, Extension Gallery Toronto, ON  
1993 *Mother Nature*, Flesherton Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1993 *Saugeen Prints*, Durham Art Gallery Durham, ON  
1992 *Saugeen Impressions*, Extension Gallery Toronto, ON  
1992 Gallery Moos Toronto, ON  
1992 *Art Bank*, Morrow Gallery Toronto, ON  
1992 Flesherton Art Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1991 *Notes & Drawings*, Extension Gallery Toronto, ON  
1991 *Associated Images*, University of Toronto, ON  
1991 Flashtown Gallery Flesherton, ON  
1990 *Friends of Gallery*, Grunwald Gallery Toronto, ON

GROUP EXHIBITIONS: continued

- 1990 *Fine Art Grads*, McDonald Stewart Art Centre Guelph, ON  
1989 *Snow Show*, Id e Gallery Toronto, ON  
1988 *Walls on Fire*, YYZ Gallery Toronto, ON  
1988 *Black on White*, Tom Thomson Gallery Owen Sound, ON  
1987 *Color & the Brush*, Sarnia Art Gallery Sarnia, ON  
1987 *Painted Room*, Tom Thomson Gallery Owen Sound, ON  
1986 *Tattletale Show*, Grey-Bruce Gallery Owen Sound, ON  
1986 *Box Art Show*, Glenhyrst Art Gallery Brantford, ON  
1986 *Toronto/Montreal*, Champlain Art Gallery Lennoxville, QC  
1985 *Collaborations*, Grunwald Gallery Toronto, ON  
1985 *Image/ Myth*, Public Image Gallery New York, USA  
1985 *Works Myths*, Artculture Resource Centre Toronto, ON  
1985 Split Rail Festival Flesherton, ON  
1985 *Art for Chile*, Gallery 620 Toronto, ON  
1984 Andrew Calixte Gallery Toronto, ON  
1984 Orbit Art Gallery Toronto, ON  
1983 Chromaliving, The Colonnade Toronto, ON  
1983 *3 Toronto Artists*, Article Gallery Montreal, QC  
1983 *Locations National*, Mercer Union Toronto, ON  
1982 *New Directions*, Queen Elizabeth Building Toronto, ON  
1982 *Words and Images*, Gallery 76 Toronto, ON  
1982 *Painting '82* Art Gallery at Harbourfront Toronto, ON  
1982 *Aviva Art Show #28*, Toronto, ON  
1982 *Cow Show*, Studio Gallery 9 Toronto, ON  
1980 *Young Contemporaries*, Regional Art Gallery London, ON  
1978 *Artventure*, Royal Bank of Canada Toronto, ON  
1977 *Miniature Show*, Gallery 76 Toronto, ON

**COLLECTIONS:**

- Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, Owen Sound, ON  
Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa ON  
Ministry of External Affairs, Ottawa ON  
Mount Sinai Hospital, Dr. Freeman, President, Toronto, ON  
Baycrest Centre, Toronto, ON  
Manitou-Wabing Sports and Arts Centre, Parry Sound, ON  
Kid's Help Foundation, Toronto, ON  
International Private Collections

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