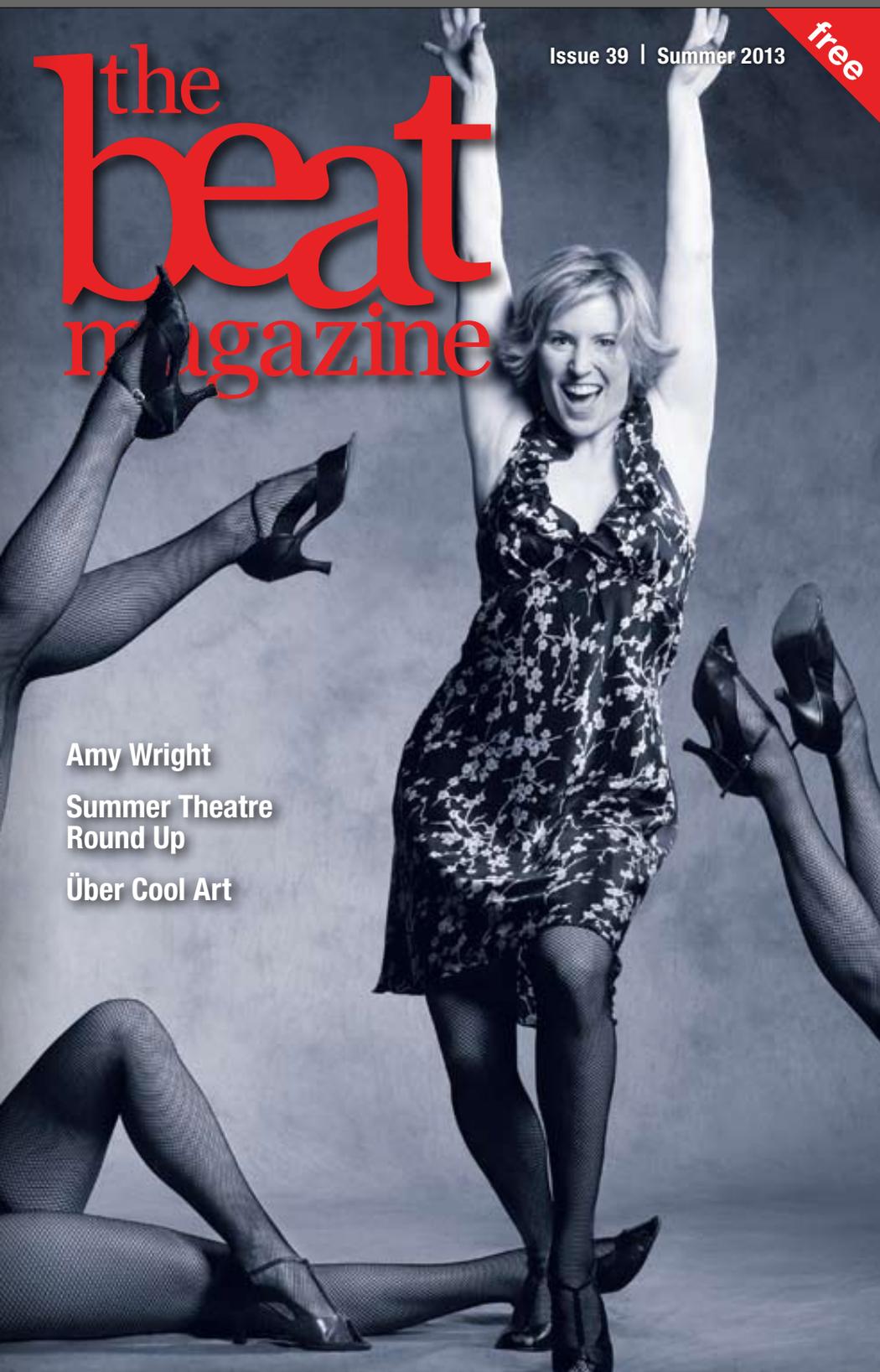


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# Vincent and Ondaatje: A retrospective intersect

By Beth Stewart



“Dom Tar with Truck, London” by Kim Ondaatje, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 162.0 x 203.0 cm, from the Factory series, 1970 (collection of the artist).

► The works of two well known artists intersect beautifully at Museum London this summer: *Bernice Vincent: Time and Travels* runs from July 6 to September 29, while *Kim Ondaatje* runs from July 20 to October 6.

Both women have ties to the Forest City; Vincent is a life-long resident and a longstanding member of the London art community, whereas Ondaatje lived and worked in London from 1967 to 1971.

*Bernice Vincent: Time and Travels* includes Museum London acquisitions, loans from the McIntosh Gallery, and works borrowed from private collections. The selected works follow a retrospective approach, including paintings, drawings and installations produced from the early 1970s through to 2011.

*Kim Ondaatje* brings together a wide range of prints, paintings and more from public and private lenders from across Canada

to explore the artist’s practice and highlight three significant series: her *Hill* works of the mid-1960s; her *Piccadilly Street interiors* of the late-1960s; and her *Factory* works of the early-1970s.

Museum London curator of art Cassandra Getty confirms the coincidence of the exhibitions was absolutely intentional.

Says Getty, “We see a shared theme amongst the works; the artists did not really know one another and did not follow the other’s work, though they did know London artists such as Greg Curnoe and Jack Chambers and were in the artist community at the same time.”

She adds, “In their personal lives, they would have had much in common in terms of raising their families and working, and making work about that context; they both concentrated on interiors of the home in their practices.”

Getty calls Vincent’s domestic scenes and Ondaatje’s Piccadilly Street interiors “similarly meditative.”

In addition, both artists deal with human intervention with the environment in their work.



“Over” by Bernice Vincent, acrylic, 44 x 106.7 cm, 1988 (purchase, 1994).

This is visible in Vincent’s recent pencil images of London which, as Getty points out, feature building cranes in the distance, showing the changing face of the city.

And it is seen in Ondaatje’s *Factory* series, in which the artist puts the factories front and centre, a deliberate act Getty attributes to the artist’s insistence in their status as a “new kind of landscape” as well as her concern about pollution.

There are additional parallels in each artist’s use of geometric form.

Getty says, “Many of Bernice Vincent’s later paintings involve harder-edge, abstract elements, within the scene itself and used as margins or border, to control and enframe the view.”

“Ondaatje’s factories also emphasize the hard edges and flat planes you find in a large industrial complex.”

The absence of people is apparent in both Vincent and Ondaatje’s work. But one gets the impression that the “absence” is transitory – something that just happened – and as such suggests the presence of people.

Getty says, “With Vincent’s work it approaches Surrealist work like de Chirico, where you feel like you want to look around a corner, or pick up the painting and look at its back, to see where everyone just went.”

While Vincent and Ondaatje share some elements of high realism seen in the work of artists like Christopher and Mary Pratt or Alex Colville, Getty says there is a difference: “I would link it more with an approach that was being developed – importantly, by Vincent and Ondaatje as well as artists like Chambers – here in London.”

Catalogues for both exhibitions are forthcoming later in 2013.

*Beth Stewart is a secondary school teacher, visual artist and writer. See her work August 6-17 at the birds in art show at the The Art Exchange. For more immediate pleasure, visit: www.bethstewart.ca.*

[www.museumlondon.ca](http://www.museumlondon.ca)

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