

## Stephanie Weirathmueller: Beauty in the Ordinary

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Volume 53, Number 216, Supplement, Fall 2009

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/61875ac>

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### Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

### ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Hammock, V. (2009). Review of [Stephanie Weirathmueller: Beauty in the Ordinary]. *Vie des Arts*, 53(216), 14–14.

I WILL ADMIT THAT FREDERICTON ARTIST STEPHANIE'S LAST NAME, WEIRATHMUELLER, IS A MOUTHFUL AND WHILE I AM ABOUT IT, SHE WAS ALSO MY STUDENT AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY, HERE IS SACKVILLE, WHERE SHE GRADUATED IN 2005. SO FROM HERE ON IN, I WILL REFER TO HER SIMPLY AS STEPHANIE AND I ALSO WILL SAY THAT MY TEACHING HAD VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH HER UNQUESTIONABLE TALENTS AS AN ARTIST. SHE WAS, AND REMAINS, A NATURAL THAT WAS EVIDENT TO ME FROM WHEN SHE ATTENDED A HIGH SCHOOL WORKSHOP I TAUGHT WHEN SHE WAS IN GRADE ELEVEN. SHE DREW BEAUTIFULLY IN THAT WORKSHOP AND CONTINUED TO DO SO IN UNIVERSITY. MY JOB WAS TO NURTURE THAT TALENT AND KEEP HER ON TRACK.

## STEPHANIE WEIRATHMUELLER

### *Beauty in the Ordinary*

By Virgil Hammock



Untitled, (2009)  
Oil on canvas  
12 x 12 in.

Recently Stephanie had a small exhibition of new paintings at Struts Gallery, an artists run space here in Sackville. There were only four small oil paintings, which ran in size from 30.5 cm square to 56 cm by 61 cm. She likes to work small and paints in a very traditional way in oil using mediums and glazes. This results in a rich surface. Jewel like would be the term that I would use. The other interesting, and important, aspect of her work is the mundane nature of her subject matter. Some would say that mundane is a bad thing, but here it is a virtue. It is something that she and I have talked about often over the years. There is beauty in the ordinary. Albrecht Dürer proved that when he painted his famous watercolour of blades of grass five hundred years ago. Everything we see can have a kick at beauty.

The four paintings in this exhibition are of a dog sitting in a field, a landscape, some kids walking, and a city street with a few cars. All are photo based and I am not sure I like that. I would

prefer that she work directly from nature, but it is an argument that I generally have about painting and photography and am likely wrong. All of these are paintings that I would like to have and, in particular, I love the dog painting. It is all of one-foot square. The dog, he or she, the painting is untitled, sits there with great dignity. All of these new painting are also greenish and that, she tells me, is because spring and summer, when she painted them, is a green time of year.

I am not the only one in these parts who has a high regard for Stephanie's work. In 2007 she was featured in a major juried group exhibition, *Site/Specific/Sight*, at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton with a number of more senior artists from Atlantic Canada, and she is represented by Fredericton's Gallery 78, which is the city's best-known commercial gallery. These things bode well for a young artist. The best comment I heard was from the well known senior Fredericton artist,

Stephen May, who in a recent newspaper interview when asked what was his favorite art work in all the world said that it was a small portrait in ball point pen made by Stephanie of himself and I believe it because I have a very little pencil drawing of myself by her that I prize.

Another point that May made in the same interview was that Stephanie is a far better artist than she herself thinks. Perhaps that is true, because she is a modest person, but she soldiers on working every day in her studio. Her production is modest as well because she labors hard on each and every work, perhaps sometimes too much, but better to over work a painting than not to put in enough effort. The four paintings from the Sackville exhibition are now at Gallery 78 along with other pieces by her. I am very sure, assuming that she continues to paint, that Stephanie Weirathmueller has a very significant future. □

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