

ERIK OLSON (/INTERVIEWS/ERIK-OLSON)

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Erik Olson has a solo exhibition of his paintings on view from July 4 to 26 at the Michael Gibson Gallery in London, Ontario.

"What I look for is to end up in a place that I've never been before. I try to push beyond comfort zones and sometimes cover up things, even if it's working, if I know that I'm going to gain something by covering it up."



OSPREY
Oil on Denim, 2014

ON THE LANDSCAPE

On the strength of bold paintings infused with intelligence and curiosity, Erik Olson has captured the attention of art collectors across Canada. His current solo exhibition is titled "The Mountains" and can be viewed from July 4th to 26th at the Michael Gibson Gallery in London, Ontario. For this collection, Olson has absorbed ideas from a variety of sources, built on his past work, and emerged with paintings that are novel and robust, somehow volatile and meditative in equal measure.

Born in Calgary in 1982, Olson graduated from the Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver in 2007. In recent years, his work has been presented widely, notably at the Art Gallery of Calgary, the Douglas Udell Gallery both in Edmonton and Vancouver, and at BravinLee Programs in New York City. His painting "The Skateboarder" was included in the 2012 BP Portrait Award exhibition, which included a showing at the National Portrait Gallery in London, England. Not one to take a break, Olson will be moving to Dusseldorf, Germany, in October 2014 to study at the Kunstakademie as the guest student of celebrated artist Peter Doig.

Context is important. Olson tends to assemble works around a specific theme. Over the years, he has produced series of paintings revolving around his travels in India, his interest in outer space, dance, and

even the pantheon of Greek and Roman gods. "Each body of work is just sort of a way for me to follow my interests and follow my intuition," the artist explains, "and then study that in a body of work."

Another focus has been portraits. Olson has presented 'the architecture of the face' in unsettling ways, using harsh, geometric shapes to break up the image, forcing the viewer to consider how we observe others. Interestingly, with the new exhibition, he is applying the same method to the western Canadian landscape. "I just started trying to, with this series, imagine almost what the environment is that maybe one of these characters would be in," he notes. "For me, this series is really just a way of looking back at almost my home territory, while I'm in Alberta, and revisiting childhood memories of living in the Rockies in the summers with my folks and all that, but really just revisiting what I consider home territory."

