

# GEORGE BILLIS GALLERY

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Two Painters Depict Distinct Views of Cities, By Peter Tonguette  
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View of Hellgate Bridge and Randalls-Ward Island from Astoria Park,  
oil on canvas, 2006, 31x66"

DELAWARE, Ohio — Big cities are the focus of two exhibits in the Richard M. Ross Art Museum at Ohio Wesleyan University.

Painters Todd Gordon and Paul Ching-Bor differ in their mediums. Gordon's cleareyed works in oil stand in contrast to Ching-Bor's foggy works in watercolor. Yet the artists share an attentiveness to urban environments.

Gordon applies a photorealist style to his renderings of steel-and-concrete creations such as bridges and back alleys, which often threaten to overtake the natural world.

Gordon, who lives in Sweden, spent his youth in Delaware before eventually moving to New York, where most of the works in the exhibit were painted.

In Hellgate Bridge and Randall's Ward Island, the bridge seems to stretch to infinity, dominating the water below and the sky above. The bridge's immensity is in part a consequence of the work's proscenium-like dimensions. The handiwork of humanity is also inescapable in NYPD Junkyard, with mangled aqua-colored steel and a stack of brown pipes resting in the foreground. It is no small irony that the most vibrant splash of color comes from the bright-yellow bulldozer amid the rubbish.

Gordon's eye for detail makes his work worth lingering on. Consider the tire tracks made in mud beneath an overpass in Under the Kosciuszko Bridge or the inconspicuous blue hose that snakes in the foreground of a factory in The Blue Hose. Gordon expertly re-creates bursts of elaborate, multicolored graffiti (View From Davis Street) and vista-obscuring billboards (Wrecks). In Bushwick Backyards, overgrown weeds fill the ground between two tenement-like buildings, but any suspicion that the area is unoccupied is countered by the presence of a rickety air conditioner in a window and a crushed beverage can.

Gordon's Ohio ties are apparent in Morrow County Line, which depicts a country road cutting through acres of green fields. Yet even this scene isn't entirely free of human influence, represented in barely perceptible telephone lines. Seen from afar, View From Cackler Road (Off Route 42) — one of the most uncluttered works — seems to have resulted from broad brushstrokes of uninterrupted color: green for fields, blue for sky and dabs of white for distant farmhouses. The piece is idyllic.

The work of international artist Ching-Bor is equally powerful. In the New York artist's watercolors of cityscapes, structures blend with their backgrounds in a smudgy blur; in fact, several paintings show skylines as if viewed through a polluted mist.

In Abyss I, the tops of two buildings disappear into the darkness of a night sky; lights in the windows add scant illumination. On the other hand, Insomniac Lights — The Woolworth Building I offers a nighttime look at the towering structure, but the structure emanates the glow of a heavenly halo. Appropriate for exhibits placing an accent on architecture, steel itself is the center of attention in High Beam I, whose solitary figure stands in front of massive crisscrossing beams.

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