

Galerie Nicolas Robert

David Elliott
7th Heaven

From February 1st to March 14, 2020



Galerie Nicolas Robert is pleased to present the exhibition *7th Heaven* by David Elliott, from February 1st to March 14, 2020. Elliott offers in this new exhibition a series of small dioramas anchored in the tradition of cabinet of curiosities and shadow theater. One of the principal Canadian artists associated with the late 1970s/early 1980s return to figuration, Elliott is perhaps best known for his large, often monumental oil paintings on canvas, which are included in the collections of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. More recently, the artist has re-oriented his practice towards the making of the small collage boxes, that once served as maquette studies for his paintings. Intimate, often sentimental, with a touch of dark humor, they have the appearance of vignettes from a stage or film production. Their diminutive scale belies their emotional and psychological power.

Creating characters largely from vintage mannequin heads and stock photos, the artist says he feels like he is making movies. In fact, the exhibition's title *7th Heaven* is taken from a 1927 romantic melodrama by Frank Borzage. While Elliott's mise en scène often pays tribute to early cinema, there is a greater eclecticism about the current collage boxes and a certain elasticity in terms of historical time and place. Some pieces suggest a bygone era, while others are more up to date, as the artist plays with the question of nostalgia and the currency of cultural memory.

The cliché of the Greenwich Village folksinger, the basement mystery writer, the artist in his drywalled loft, the performers on a darkened stage are all, in their most general sense, examinations of the creative life. They are also Elliott's attempt at re-constructing something vivid from a lifetime spent balancing everyday realities with the collective consciousness of cinema, literature, music, art and the cornucopia of the internet. What is real and what is made up? Is the made up more real than the real? The frisson between the quotidian and the exalted, between the hyper-real and the obviously fake has always been a part of Elliott's practice. While he may sometimes miss the scale and the trompe l'oeil "wow-factor" of his earlier work, he has come to appreciate the poetics of the new collage boxes. Perhaps they are capable of eliciting more personal and intimate emotional responses. Or perhaps, they are simply more playful and entertaining.

Born in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1953, David Elliott has lived and worked in Montreal since 1977 and has exhibited his paintings both nationally and internationally for over 40 years. In 1993 the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City organized David Elliott: Pintura, a retrospective of his work. More recent exhibitions include *La Chambre enchantée* at the Musée Régional de Rimouski (2012), *Collage: Gestes et fragments*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2014), *Constellations*, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2016) and *Million Dollar Bash* at Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran (2017).