

A Show of Miniatures Strongly Suggests Less is More

by Crystal GAVARD

The works in Illuminations : a Show of Miniatures are grand, despite their diminutive scale. This elliptic collection of Island artists' works is grand in creative scope and inspiration. And, without exception, monstrous in its technical exigencies. The show vividly illustrates that the demands of working small are as, if not more, exacting than those of the larger scale work that is normally prevalent among this show's participants. A viewer of the exhibit — it was first mounted last autumn at the Lunenburg Art Gallery — commented that it "strongly suggests less is more."

Illuminations will be accessible to the Island public early in 2002; Robertson Library at the University of Prince Edward Island is hosting the exhibit beginning on January 19 in the Special Collections room that houses the PEI Collection. It is the first in what library staff hope will be a series of shows to take place in this unique venue.

The tradition of illuminations or enluminures dates to early Roman religious or inspirational hand-copied texts in which initial capital letters were artistically-rendered. Coloured, stylised, organic vegetable forms characterised the early illuminated texts. Later themes included depictions of animals, real and imagined,

miniature landscapes and people. Over time, visual elements came to challenge the textual, conspiring to distract from the words rather than enhance them.

Originally conceived as an exploration of this marriage of textual and visual elements, Illuminations is a modern creation; it contains more images than words. Rare are the opportunities to recreate the scriptorium where scribes and illuminators worked side-by-side. In this exhibit, featuring the works of a dozen local artists, the visual pieces mostly stand, and were created, alone. One combination — photographs by Dominique Cruchet, poems by Catherine Matthews — does have an interplay between image and text, in a non-traditional illumination style.

Observe the mastery of the miniature form inspired by and contained in Illuminations at UPEI's Robertson Library from Saturday, January 19 through to Sunday, February 10, 2002. The show opens on Thursday, January 24, from 6 to 8 in the evening.

For venue enquiries and suggestions for future displays at the Robertson Library, contact Crystal Gavard at 566-0462 or cgavard@upe.ca. For more information about this exhibit, contact Dominique Cruchet at 368-2601.

Eden Robinson: Native Author to Read

Eden Robinson, a powerful new fiction writer of Haisla heritage who was raised in Haisla territory on the B.C. coast near Kitimat, will read from her work at 8:00pm on Thursday, January 24, at Confederation Centre Library.

Robinson's first book, a collection of stories, *Traplins* (1998), won the Winifred Holtby Prize for the best work of fiction in the Commonwealth. Her second book, the novel *Monkey Beach* (2000) was nominated for the 2000 Governor General's Award for fiction and the 2000 Giller Prize, and was an Editor's Choice of *The Globe and Mail*.

Eden Robinson's reading is sponsored by the UPEI English Department and the Canada Council of the Arts. The public is invited and admission is free. For further information phone 566-0389.

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Life's Like That

Sam used to read a lot. She read fiction and biographies for herself, and French philosophy when she wanted to impress. Sam read at home on her balcony, in bed before she went to sleep, and on the subway to and from work. On the days that she didn't have lunch with a friend, she read in the park.

A friend asked Sam her opinion about a book of short stories she had been reading months ago, "Door Locked, Key Inside." It had only been two months since Sam had read the book, though she had read a biography of Ronald Reagan and three or four novels about horseracing in the mean time (lately, horseracing appealed to her).

Sam didn't remember anything other than the title of the book. She didn't remember the stories

inside, or even the authors. Sam didn't know what to tell her friend, and began to think about all the other books she had read which were now so foggy in her memory. She could recall many titles and authors, but the books that had taken her hours and hours, even days to read, were vague and indistinct memories.

Appalled that she might be wasting so much time, Sam devised a complicated system of note taking that could be done on the inner jackets of books she read, and which would help her remember in much more detail. Though initially excited about her new system, Sam quickly became overwhelmed and soon stopped reading altogether.

Now when Sam wants to impress someone, she washes her hair and wears that red v-neck t-shirt.