

Savvy Saby presents 1000 works on paper

To say that London artist Brian Saby is prolific is an understatement. Prolific only begins to describe his staggering output of work in a brief period of time.

The products of his artistic mission can be seen at his one-man show entitled *Metamorphosis: 1000 Works on Paper*, currently showing at 700

Contemporary Art, Saby's own gallery/ studio/ living space at 700 Dundas Street East (858-9585). The show runs until April 27, 2002.

It took Saby about a year to create the thousand pieces in the show, a rate of almost three per day. He works quickly to preserve the immediacy of the creative process, and many of the pieces in the show display hastily scrawled backgrounds. This does not imply that they were drawn carelessly or thoughtlessly, however! Only quickly, and energetically. Onto these hand drawn backgrounds Saby has added elements of painting, drawing, and collage. In fact, Saby found himself on a first name basis with the staff at MC Reproductions while working on this project, as he visited the store daily to photocopy backgrounds and images for his collages.

Those accustomed to viewing large paintings in sparse gallery settings will be unprepared for the impact of 1000 works in one gallery. Hung side by side and row upon row in four different rooms and down one hallway of the gallery, the show can be read like a book. Arranged in chronological order, the 8 1/2 x 11 works are, in Saby's words, "a visual diary."

Like a diary, the work in the show is raw, unedited,

and immediate. This show is about process rather than product. Saby calls the work in the show "warm-ups" for his paintings, which are physically larger and visually sparer. Even so, these smaller works borrow from Saby's larger works, as he often

reduces his paintings on a colour copier and uses scraps from the copies on the smaller collages.

700 Contemporary Art opened in September of 1999, with another exhibition of Saby's own work. He puts on three or four major shows of other artists' work every year, but has strayed from his original intent of showing only abstract work. Saby himself studied art at Fanshawe College in London in the 70s and calls his style of painting "minimal colour field combined with abstract expressionism."

Among his influences Saby cites Jackson Pollock, Carl Jung, and Barnett Newman, the American abstract painter who sought to eliminate any reference to objects, figures, and symbols in his work, choosing instead to work with only colour and space.

Saby plans to continue his ambitious project by stepping up the pace of his work so that by next year he has 5000 of his works on paper. Does he worry about running out of ideas? "I ran out the other day," Saby confesses. "I went back to drawing. You can always go back to that." A self-confessed obsessive who "soaks up other people's energy like a sponge," Saby won't be without creative ideas for long. It may be that the available wall space runs out before the inspiration does.

—Tess Parkins

Brian Saby. #500, 2001

