

## Shaken Up All Over

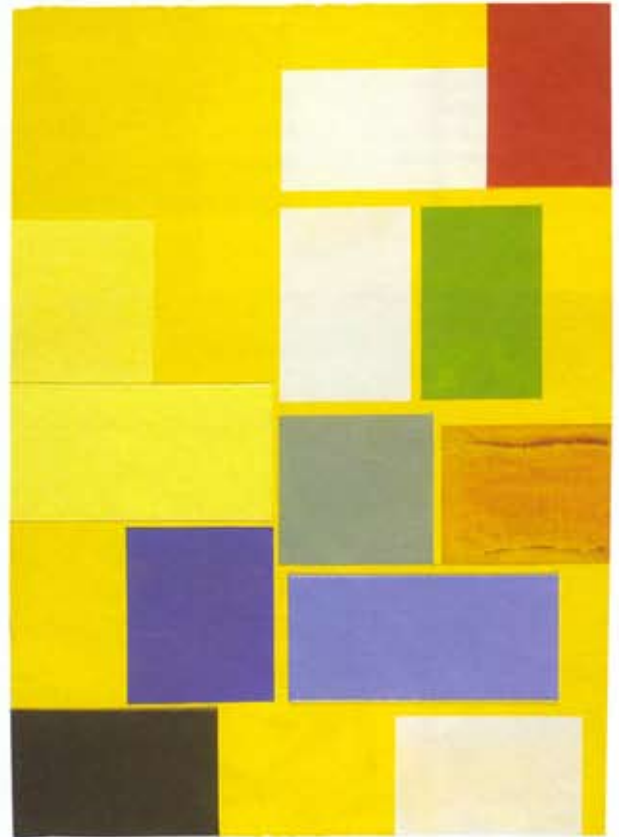
"My interest in the physical nature of paint has been consistent since I was in art school in 1980-81. It's always been about going back and mucking around with paint, with how it goes down, with the juiciness of paint." **Jonathan Forrest** has earned his colours and the right to talk about paint in Saskatoon, a city in which artists pay excruciating attention to this most mercurial of art forms. "For me, it's a totally intuitive process, guided by what happens in the studio."

What's been happening in the studio are some dramatic changes. Forrest's earlier work was stained and poured, and the canvasses that came out of this process were densely overpainted, "minimal all-over slabs of paint," in the artist's own description. Sometimes he would work on a canvas for as long as four months.

Then in 2000 he attended an Emma Lake Workshop organized by Robert Christie, his former professor and now his employer at Art Placement, the city's main commercial gallery and art supplier. The workshop, which was only two weeks long, was an example of necessity being the mother of reduction. The

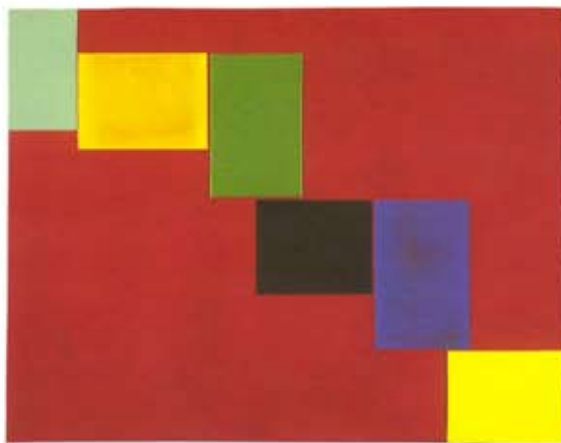
short time frame meant that Forrest had to abandon the layering of paint he had been doing and settle on a quicker way to work the surface. "That was the trigger I've followed for the last four years."

The process altered his palette as well. "In the last year I've gotten into this high key, intense colour. My preference had been for subtle, mixed colours. All the things I'm doing now are a no-no in terms



BORDERCROSSINGS 2004 13

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top left: Jonathan Forrest, *Red Progression*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 32".

top right: Jonathan Forrest, *Willow Sequence*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 40".

middle right: Jonathan Forrest, *Pink Ebbow*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 32 x 24".

bottom left: Kristine Moran, *Beal Iq*, 2004, oil and enamel on panel, 24 x 24". Courtesy Angel Gallery, Toronto.

of how I learned to paint. You don't go high contrast, you don't put complementary colours right next to each other. These are in-your-face, jarring works and I like that about them. It's kind of shaken up my approach to making paintings." *Green Pulse*, 2004, is an example of this shake-up. In describing how he made it, Forrest still sounds surprised: "Starting out with a bright green ground is a ridiculous thing to do. And

then what are you going to do? Put red on it and then what happens? You add black and white. There's a point where you realize you can't do the same thing again, you have to throw something in there. You have to do that to get out of your own skin."

In *Yellow Lock*, 2004, a dazzling new acrylic with a de Stijl style, he seems to have gotten into Mondrian's skin. "He is obviously right up my alley," Forrest says. "There is certainly an echo in the geometry and the primary colours. The play of thick-to-thin is also in those rectangles. They optically and physically push forward and pull backward, in and off the ground." There is another echo in that push-pull, which takes him back to Hoffmann and another tradition from which Forrest has drawn inspiration. In the work of this gifted young painter, you can happily see both the Forrest and the trees. ■

