Mike Bayne is a prominent Canadian painter who lives and works in Kingston, Ontario. He holds an MFA from Concordia University (2004), and a combined Bachelor’s degrees in Art History and BFA from Queen’s University Kingston (2001). He has been exhibiting in both Canada and the United States in solo and group exhibitions since 2004 and in 2011 was the winner of the Kingston Art Prize, in addition to grants from the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. Bayne’s work has been acquired by numerous prominent public and private collections including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas, The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon, and the Wieland Collection, Atlanta, Georgia.

Over the past decade Mike Bayne has become widely recognized for his consistent approach to painting that involves the use of oil on incredibly small panels to depict buildings and areas of the urban/suburban landscape in meticulously hyperrealist fashion. In his works he transforms what are otherwise mundane and unremarkable parts of city, town, or country into quietly sublime painterly snapshots of the quotidian.
Curator Sunny Kerr has described the artist as an “itinerant documentarian” who “walks and photographs, considers, crops, determines planes and depths [and finally] composes.”\(^1\) It can take up to six weeks for Bayne to complete a painting, and this excludes time spent researching materials and subjects, as well as taking photographs. Critic Robert Enright clarifies that for the painter, “anything can be revelatory, but he recognizes the complete process carries with it a responsibility to pay attention.”\(^2\) Bayne’s practice is one whereby close study begins to reveal the subtle beauty of colour, form, and atmosphere that resonates around places that would otherwise go unnoticed. His paintings call on the viewer to consider the importance of time and close analysis as tools towards further insight and revelation. According to Bayne his paintings are, “the opposite of much of what we are surrounded by. I just think there’s room for something that is quiet and subtle in visual culture, as well as things that are big and bombastic”\(^3\).

By closely observing and reproducing his surroundings and the photographed environment, Bayne compares and studies the effects of natural versus artificial light while conveying a sense of human absence and isolation in his landscapes. His paintings carry a contemplative orientation and address the banal, commonplace objects and spaces of everyday life. His work has been described as exemplifying a “romantic investment in the everyday”, allowing viewers to “see a sort of small-town sublime.”\(^4\) Bayne is plain-spoken when it comes to such associations: “My interest in suburbia and the specific types of architecture I depict in my paintings stems from an appreciation for the humility and lack of ambition of North American residential construction. The materials are cheap, the buildings have a temporary feel, and there’s a utilitarian minimalism, amongst other things. It’s as if they represent the moving away from idealism and more towards something like a collective shrug. Also, I think they tell us something about ourselves, about the way we want to recreate the world in order to appeal to human consciousness — to impose some sense of order on what looks like chaos to the human brain. And I try not to judge the results of that project — it’s not the best we can do — but, where I live, we seem to be ok with that.”\(^5\)

Finally, a word about the veracity of Bayne’s paintings and their extraordinary likeness to a photograph. Here questions of artistic labor, banality, and the disposable, mass-produced, object (a snapshot) can be brought into the dialogue with respect to the artist’s intentions. On this point Bayne asks, “What does it mean when the product of labour-intensive craft has the look of a mass produced object? I don’t have the answer for this, but recognize that it challenges the idea that the art object should be something extraordinary. The ordinary can be just as much a revelation.”\(^6\)

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