



## THE BIG FOLDY PAINTING OF DEATH IAN FORBES

APRIL 6–MAY 12, 2012 IN THE MAIN SPACE

MONOGRAPH ESSAY BY JEREMY TODD

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LATITUDE 53 INVITES MEMBERS AND GUESTS:

OPENING RECEPTION FRIDAY APRIL 6 AT 7:00 PM

ARTIST TALK SATURDAY APRIL 7 AT 2:00 PM

LATITUDE 53 CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

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## LIVING WITH THE BIG FOLDY PAINTING OF DEATH

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Made specifically for installation at Latitude 53 and based on a series of bookworks started in 2008, *The Big Foldy Painting Of Death* is six feet high and 127 feet, eight inches across. Artist Ian Forbes has been diligently working away on this large canvas scroll since November of 2011, chronicling his progress with a blog featuring commentary and casual documentation. The finished work will be a continuous loop covering the entire interior circumference of the gallery. The far left edge will meet the right, creating a panoramic enclosure that is seemingly full of excess and digression.

One might initially feel like they are inside Forbes' head while surrounded by his labyrinth-like associations and fantasies, but the work-a-day, unedited generation of the content (in a manner more akin to factory shift work than Surrealist automatism) prevents this sensation from lasting very long. In a blog post dated December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Forbes states: "Up to 22 feet today. It is already tempting to go back and fix things... no time though." There's an overt presence of a pragmatic systems-based approach throughout the work that places any intimation of immediate self-portraiture firmly within quotations. A tension is set up between expectations of content relating to genre and the everyday directives of process and circumstance. Autobiographical reflection in good faith is challenged.

The *Big Foldy Painting Of Death* adds to this tension with a continuous flow of compounding (meta)narrative complications. The supposed thought processes of the artist as he worked on the project, and the impossibility of anyone, including the artist, possessing a fixed and autonomous subjectivity, are theatrically staged at once. The work's structure also conflates continuously interactive, relational determinations of meaning (rejecting the frame and singular, instantaneousness of vision and intent commonly

associated with the image in Western art) with an over-determined whole that preemptively excises curatorial input, collaborative processes and/or mediation. Content also plays a role in this paradoxical doubling, conflating juvenile, scatological and abject senses of humor and protestation with the gravitas of more metaphysical modes of self-reflexive inquiry.

References to high and low cultural forms, themes and ideas are complexly intertwined, spliced and confused. Monty Python's Flying Circus, colour field painting, graffiti, history painting, recreational drug use, polemical engagements with critical theory and post-structuralism, comic books, the Romantic Sublime, the Gothic Grotesque, post-punk bands and countless other phenomena co-exist and interact in a manner that transcends illustrations of a parody/pastiche dichotomy. A vast array of styles and storytelling, discontent, questioning, and observation are jointly animated through allegorical reference and performative representation (including a plethora of thought and dialogue bubbles). A critical plurality is playfully activated, functioning as a corpus of provocation for those who engage with it.

It is a politicized multitude disenfranchised by the present moment (our so-called post-ideological age). Everyone and everything presented seems contained within a paradigm of equivalencies, a graveyard or terminal meeting place between the conclusions of market logic and personal interiorities (the landscape as unconscious mind). The motley chorus of this work reveals a messy conflation of the perceived and actual, the generic and specific, the refined and brutish, individuals and collectives, the trite and profound, subjects and objects, etc. The Big Foldy Painting Of Death functions in a manner eerily reminiscent of the vanitas tradition that persisted past the birthing pains of Modernity. We're deftly led to our own illusions. We are rhetorically asked to consider what constitutes our lives and how we live them.

—Jeremy Todd



**Ian Forbes:** I was born in Toronto, raised in Alberta and currently live and work in Vancouver. My practice is an ongoing investigation of visual narrative creation by means of the "Foldy Sensibility." I prefer dogs to cats.

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**Jeremy Todd** is an interdisciplinary artist, teacher, curator and musician. He is currently a faculty member of the Vancouver Film School, organizes interdisciplinary event programs as part of his ongoing Not Sent Letters Project (<http://notsentlettersproject.com>) and performs in the new music group Payday Millionaire.



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