

# And They Faded into the Landscape: Arnold Shives

SEYMOUR ART GALLERY, NORTH VANCOUVER BC

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Arnold Shives was born in Vancouver in 1943 and was a childhood friend of the avant-garde poet bpNichol (1944-1988). Like Nichol, Shives was interested in human consciousness. In 1964, he enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute. As another poet, Edward Lucie-Smith, wrote in his essay "Shives the Transcendentalist": "Shives was caught up in the radical climate of that time, but for him it triggered a spiritual quest."



Arnold Shives, *Mt. Fromme VI*, 2018, oil, acrylic and collage on canvas

Today Shives' quest might lie less in books than in the trees that supply them their pages – "the sinewy sprawl of Vine Maples, the bark pattern of cottonwoods" that he communes with on his morning walks near his North Vancouver studio. "I like to think that this ritual of forest immersion sharpens ear and eye," he writes on his website. "To those who are receptive, the splendor of nature colonizes the imagination."

For his current exhibition, Shives presents seven large-scale mixed-media paintings, blending oil and acrylic, abstraction and figuration, stamp and stencil, montage and collage. Not surprisingly, these are landscape paintings, or at least they begin as such, with attention paid to Mount Fromme, known to many Lower Mainlanders as the "crown jewel" of the North Shore mountains.

Informed by his printmaking practice, Shives works his canvases in multiple directions, laying down figures and forms in paint, only to remove them with razor blades, then rebuilding his surfaces using collage, stencil and stamping techniques. The process evokes growth, decay and rebirth, but also the routes one takes when travelling life's forest path.

Michael Turner