

## Arnold Shives' Mountains

A longtime Vancouver printmaker explores his love of alpine terrains – in paintings.

by Beverly Cramp

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Arnold Shives, "Mt. Fromme I," 2013, oil, acrylic and collage on canvas, 48" x 72"

Six of seven paintings in Arnold Shives' show at North Vancouver's Seymour Art Gallery are titled *Mt. Fromme*. Yet none actually depict the peak, a popular recreational spot near Shives' home on the North Shore.

Instead, he uses the mountain's name – distinguishing each work with a Roman numeral from I to VI – as a marker for a deep investigation of the alpine terrains he loves. Best known as a printmaker, Shives says he actually started out as a painter



What's intriguing about this show, *and they faded into the landscape*, on view until Nov. 3, is how his printmaking sensibility informs his paintings, which he treats as layered processes.

All the paintings are richly textured. Depth is achieved by adding pigment, scraping and scratching it down, and then painting it back up. Shives also collages in string, fabric, wood strips and other materials, and adds stamped symbols and other marks.

He worked simultaneously on the six paintings in the *Mt. Fromme* series over six years.



Arnold Shives, "Cold Mountain," 1993, acrylic on routed wood, 96" x 96"

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A large painting from 1993, *Cold Mountain*, rounds out the show. This earlier work was made on wood routed with curved gouges that are reminiscent of mountain streams.

Shives' palette generally favours cool pastels lightened occasionally with bits of coloured string and the odd dab of bright paint.



An avid hiker, he prefers sub-alpine terrains awash in sunlight, unhindered by the shadows and deeper tones of the forests found in work by other West Coast artists, particularly Emily Carr. The bright white light of higher altitudes is his forte.

Shives grew up in North Vancouver and decided to be an artist when he was 10. He studied at the University of British Columbia, and then in California at the San Francisco Art Institute and Stanford University.



Arnold Shives, "Mt. Fromme III," 2014, oil, acrylic and collage on canvas, 48" x 72"

In the catalogue essay, Montreal-based writer John K. Grande notes the influence of Richard Diebenkorn and David Park, who taught Shives at Stanford. Grande also points to similarities with the landscapes of Fred Varley, who lived nearby in Lynn Valley, and the routed plywood of Ontario-based Patterson Ewen.

But Grande says Shives breaks new ground in his use of mixed media. "The range of depths amid the colours and textures of vines, branches, trees in *Mt. Fromme III* is choreographed beautifully," he writes. "It is less about a graphic sense than a spatial, experiential breakthrough." ■

Arnold Shives' exhibition, *and they faded into the landscape* is on view at the Seymour Art Gallery in North Vancouver from Sept. 15 to Nov. 3, 2018.

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