

IN THIS CORNER, A REAL ONE-TWO PUNCH



PAUL GESSELL
ART AND THE CITY

The photographic portraits carry the wallop of a knockout punch. And well they should. They are of boxers, mere minutes after a fight, when the fighters are all pumped with adrenaline. Some are dazed and bruised. Some are cocky, even the ones who just got the snot beat out of them.

We see the story of the fight and past fights etched onto their faces. Photographer Colin Crowell, 25, has not just captured their battered exterior, he has laid bare their souls in these remarkable head-and-shoulder portraits.

Some examples of Crowell's eight-piece *Prizefighters* series were recently spotted at La Petite Mort Gallery in the Byward Market. The gallery director, Guy Bérubé, had seen examples of Crowell's work at the re-

cent exhibition for the first graduates of the year-old School of the Photographic Arts on Dalhousie Street. Recognizing a great talent, Bérubé quickly signed up this Sault Ste. Marie lad who once dreamed of being a wildlife photographer but who has since thrown over the animal kingdom for humans. We are far more interesting, aren't we?

Crowell is a boxing fan but not a boxer himself: "There were too many concussions from football and wrestling," he jokes during a recent lunch interview.

But he thinks his knowledge of boxing helped him win over the subjects for his *Prizefighters* series. The boxers were all competing in a World Boxing Organization event last February at the Casino Lac-Leamy in Gatineau. At the end of each match, Crowell was given three minutes to lead the boxer to a makeshift photo studio in the building, shoot him and then send him off to the showers. There was no room for errors. The pictures were shot with a Cambo four-by-five-inch. No digital for this boy.

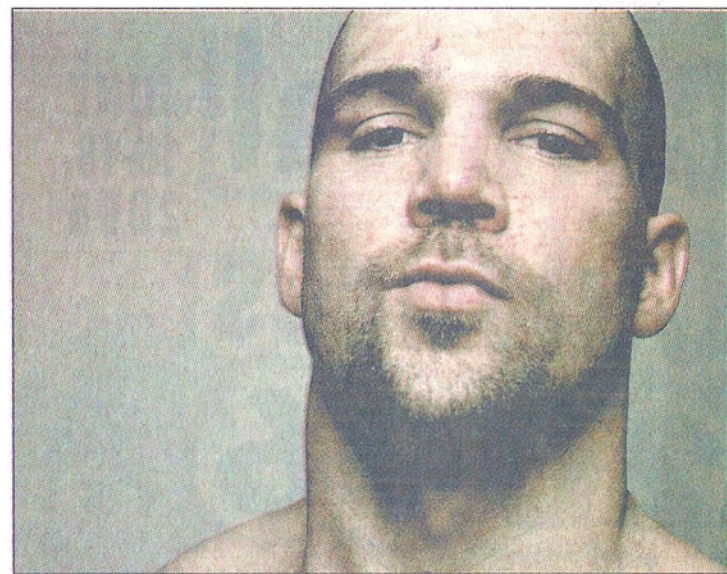
Crowell's résumé includes everything from being a

Hansard reporter on Parliament Hill to working as a fishmonger and a car salesman. Photography was the one thing he decided he wanted to do for the rest of his life.

Initially, Crowell studied photography for a year at Algonquin College. He then followed instructor Michael Tardioli over to the new School of the Photographic Arts for a second year. Tardioli and Khalia Scott are the founders of the school and are instructors there.

Crowell and 19 others comprised the school's first graduating class. Crowell and fellow student Angelina McCormick won the 2006 Applied Arts Award in the student category, sponsored by the Canadian publication *Applied Arts Magazine*.

Crowell's winning entry was a gruesome twosome — separate photographs of a man and woman stretched out on what looks like a table in a morgue. (Actually, the two are each lying on a large developing table in a photo lab.) They are alive, naked and seemingly ready for an autopsy or a jolt of electricity to turn them into Frankenstein creations. The narrative



COLIN CROWELL

One example of photographer Colin Crowell's remarkable eight-piece *Prizefighters* series, recently spotted at La Petite Mort Gallery.

of the photographs is a riddle never to be solved.

Since graduating, Crowell has lined up some commercial work, wants to do more portraits and some editorial work. He is also hoping to assemble enough material for an exhibition. He's especially interested in cornering more boxers.

CAPTURING THE FRIGHT OF 9/11

The only thing that seems to make us more nervous than a terrorist is an artist tackling issues surrounding the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

One feature-length docudrama about the events of Sept. 11, 2001, *United 93*, has been gener-

ally praised by the critics but has not been attracting large, enthusiastic audiences. A more classic Hollywood-style film from Oliver Stone, called *World Trade Centre*, is to open across North America Aug. 9. Everyone seems nervous about that one.

Likewise, everyone seemed nervous about *Names of the Dead: An Elegy for the Victims of Sept. 11*, a 2004 book from Kingston author Diane Schoemperlen. Everyone was also nervous about John Crip-ton's ballet *Requiem 9/11* in 2002 at the National Arts Centre.

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Art: Haunting images

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Ottawa visual artist Bryna Cohen knows all about that kind of nervousness. For the past few years, Cohen has been creating a body of work inspired by 9/11. There are haunting photo-based images of real people jumping from the World Trade Center. ("When I was doing those works, I was shaking sometimes.") There are pretty but melancholy paintings of bouquets of flowers left in front of the U.S. Embassy on Sussex Drive immediately after Sept. 11.

Cohen has captured the fright, uncertainty and devastation that characterize these post 9/11 times. Her art should be seen.

But these works will not be in Cohen's latest exhibition, which opens tomorrow at Galerie St-Laurent and Hill and continues until June 21. Instead, Cohen will be exhibiting a series of paintings of elegant floral bouquets. Cohen is known for such works. It's what customers want. It's what galleries

want. Ottawa is not ready yet, apparently, for images of bodies falling from the World Trade Center.

Cohen has shown her 9/11 works to various curators and galleries. She has been encouraged by their praise. But she has been disappointed by their reluctance to exhibit her works.

Cohen did exhibit one of her 9/11 creations, a photo-based work called *Terror*, last year at an instructors' show at the Ottawa School of Art, where she's a teacher. *Terror* raised some eyebrows, generated brief headlines and was soon forgotten.

Cohen sees her work as a tribute to all the ordinary people who got out of bed Sept. 11, 2001, kissed their kids goodbye and then went to work, never imagining they would soon be jumping out of windows. "I don't want them to be forgotten."

SHAKEN AND PERPLEXED

A new exhibition at Patrick Mikhail Gallery by Halifax-based art photographer Richard Hines leaves one

perplexed and slightly shaken. Hines presents a series of ambiguous narratives centred around a troubled-looking pre-adolescent boy and his interactions with adults.

Are these ordinary domestic dramas? Or is some-

thing far more serious, possibly more violent or abusive, unfolding? A complex novel could be written about each of these pictures.

The exhibition, titled *Pictures from (Inside)*, continues until June 30.