

# Lifestyle

## California artist goes on Montreal painting spree

Alexander Hecht does it every year. He hops a plane from California, gets off in Montreal and heads to his dad Stephen Hecht's basement.

There, he has a full complement of his favourite acrylic paints and several blank canvases. The only reason he'll come out of his home-away-from-home studio is to sample the things he misses most out west, namely smoked meat, poutine and St. Viateur bagels.

Meanwhile, the Shayne Gallery at 5471 Royalmount Ave., having represented him here for the past two years, waits with anticipation for its latest Hecht paintings to arrive.

In this way, the artist manages to supply his gallery without incurring shipping charges, as well as visit his dad, a real estate developer, something he's been doing every summer since he was

seven years old and his parents went their separate ways, his mom taking him to California.

Now, at 25, he has one semester to go for a fine arts degree from Humboldt State University in Arcata while fulfilling his already busy professional commitments as an artist, not only to the Shayne but also to the Elaine

paint while turning the canvas or walking around its four sides.

"I wait for inspiration, and it usually comes late at night. That's when I paint the most. Sometimes I'll really get into the zone, work all night and not realize it," Hecht says. "It's intimidating at first to see all that white on a blank canvas, but I try not to think about it too much. I jump in and use my natural intuition with paint to let it go. Because I'm so abstract, it's all about spontaneity."

Hecht's paintings are rooted in the Quebec automatist style as well as American abstract expressionism, defining his own divided roots. But unlike Jean-Paul Riopelle, Hecht does not use palette knives. He uses brushes and found objects to manipulate the paint.

Different from Jackson Pollock, he doesn't drip and throw his pigments, though like him he works on the flat rather than at an easel. Hecht also applies paint in an equally emotional manner that seeps through to the viewer via the abundance of colour, edible-looking impasto and impassioned texture.

His canvases are overall renditions of the feelings he is experiencing at the moment of creation and one can't help but be energized by them.

"I use different kinds of brushes and random items like magazines, cardboards, even the ends of brushes, anything I can find to make interesting marks. I like acrylics because I work in layers and they dry very quickly," the artist says.

Hecht titles his compositions using what he calls "stream of consciousness. These are the first words that pop into my mind." Some examples are *Alive With* and *She Required*. His intent, though, is for the viewer to feed off his visuals and find their own connection.

Hecht's journey into abstract art

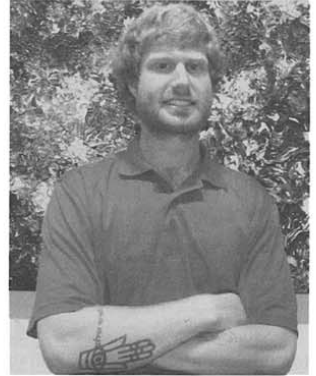


### Arts Scene

Heather Solomon

Baker Gallery in Boca Raton, Fla., which also carries his work.

"I've always been interested in art, since I was a little kid," says the artist, whose grandparents' art collection planted his early interest. The fascination grew into a way of life. This includes sequestering himself to enter into a dance with the canvas, as he adds and moves



Alexander Hecht makes his annual stop-over in Montreal to paint for the Shayne Gallery. [Heather Solomon photo]

evolved from figurative drawings that he began to deconstruct. He moved into the medium of paint, starting with lines and expanding to pattern and texture.

The redwood forest where he lives, and white salt deposits around the Dead Sea that he noted on a trip to Israel last summer, have contributed to his palette, along with a myriad of other sights and sensations.

"I like to let my paintings evolve on their own, and I'm just the conduit," he says. He notes that painting is like therapy, and after releasing his emotions onto the canvas, he enjoys the feeling of serenity. That feeling is matched by the wording he wears on a forearm tattoo of a hamsa with Hebrew text quoting from the introduction to *Yizkor* prayers: "Protect the perfect and watch the upright for there is a destiny for a man of peace."