

# Life's Interesting Images

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*A Silent Place* (2010) is among Daryl Rydman's art being shown at Culina Highlands | SUPPLIED

## **A DIFFERENT SETTING FOR AN ART SHOWING WORKS WELL FOR DARYL RYDMAN'S PROVOCATIVE PIECES**

DARYL RYDMAN ARTWORK  
Culina Highlands Restaurant (6509-112th Ave.)

BY PIOTR GRELLA-MOZEJKO

"I do not think of myself as a political or environmentally-conscientious artist," Daryl Rydman says, "but I think somehow I captured in my latest work the spirit of the calamity, whose character and magnitude affected many of us, regardless of our respective outlooks."

The soft-spoken Rydman, lecturer at the University of Alberta's Department of Art and Design, refers to the disaster at Syncrude's Aurora mine, where in 2008 more than 1,600 ducks died after landing in the toxic tailings reservoir.

"When you hear the word 'aurora,' the overawing phenomenon of 'aurora borealis' comes to mind immediately. I find it creepily ironic that at the site of that beautifully named mine such a tragedy occurred. I also find it cruelly ironic that some of the paints I use in my work are made of chemical components

extracted from oil. That's why I needed to communicate my feelings in a series of works reflecting nature violated by man."

How is it done?

"In this series," he says, "I used a multilayered technique, which relies in part on other people's paintings – I am especially fond of the 17th-century Dutch still lifes, represented among others by Willem van Aelst, Pieter Claesz, Jan Davidszoon de Heem and Jan Weenix – where you often see dead game: swans, ducks, rabbits shot during a hunt. These paintings are 'quoted' in my works. I start off with an empty canvas treated with acrylic paint, to which I then apply a large photocopy of a detail of a pre-existing image. As soon as the paint is dry, I wash off the paper on which the photocopy was made, yet the photocopied portion of the original image still adheres to the paint; the latter acts as sort of a glue. This resulting image becomes the first stratum of the given work, to which I'm now able to add more layers, sometimes more quotes. I call this process 'jamming with images' because to me it has a lot to do with how things are done in music, particularly mu-

sic based on samples. In the end you have a painting, in which several separate layers coexist, all contributing to the intended message."

"I call these new paintings of mine 'discreet elegies,'" Rydman continues, "They are definitely elegies because they deal with death and destruction, but they are also discreet in that they use the grim imagery in an unobtrusive way." He points out a piece with a blood-coloured globe in the centre, "Do you see the bird?"

Indeed, a faint shape of a dead bird, hanging upside down, gradually emerges. Once the shape is spotted, the impact of the image becomes incredibly strong.

Rydman has exhibited in galleries across the country and in Europe. The new pieces, however, are shown at the Culina Highlands restaurant. Why?

"I wanted to try something new and when Geoffrey Lilge (marketing director at Culina) invited me to show my work there, I jumped at the opportunity. The setting is less official – and because of that my work can speak directly, without the artificial veneer of a gallery situation. I love it."