

Lock up your art!

ART REVIEW

In a whimsical exhibition, eight artists do their thing in storage lockers, exploring the dislocation of relocation.

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Locker number nine houses, say, old Aunt Susan's bedroom suite. Number 27 might be used for cousin Johnny's old LPs, warping as they age. But numbers 28, 33, 48, 86, 107, 120, 159 and 170 are full of contemporary art. This is *Moving & Storage*, a sparkling little travelling show fresh in from stints in u-lock-its in Ottawa and Montreal and now at Queen West Self Storage in Toronto.

Show up at the freshly renovated warehouse and an attendant will pass you a map and a key to find and open eight art-full lockers by eight artful artists. Head straight for the well-known veterans — Ian Carr-Harris, Mark Gomes, Richard

Purdy — or take the doors in numerical order so as to mix in the more junior crowd of Andrew Forster, Vera Greenwood, Gwen MacGregor, Marcus Miller and Ineke Standish. The fun of this treasure hunt ought to cheer even the most jaded art-world veterans.

Behind door number 107, Ottawa's Ineke Standish, who dreamt up the exhibition with fellow Ottawa Vera Greenwood, has filled her space with a stainless-steel sculpture that, as a stand-alone object, comes closest to standard museum fare. A box-like storage tank, chest high and topped up with water, sits on two fat, fresh-hewn logs, while a soundtrack of vaguely industrial rumblings fills the air. The meaning



Andrew Forster's surreal chair and crooning songs: fun but perplexing.

may be elusive — a reflection on the meeting and melding of nature and industry? — but it sure looks good under the bare-bulb light.

Further down the door-lined halls, there's locker 159, rented out by veteran Toronto sculptor Mark Gomes. Open up this unit, and

there's hardly space to look inside. Somehow, a ping-pong table has managed to sneak in and fill its edge to edge. The table, in turn, is just a funky base for a giant relief map of some unknown, hilly landscape, hand-crafted by Gomes in corrugated cardboard. Again, a cryptic

mix but, this time, it evokes the crazy juxtapositions that tightly packed storage sometimes brings about. (Walking the halls of this show, you often think you've spotted an open exhibition cubicle, only to discover that it's in normal use; what you thought was art is the product of some pack-rat's sense of what's worth keeping.)

A number of the show's other Toronto artists have also chosen to make the dislocations of relocation the theme of their work. Ian Carr-Harris's laconic piece is a junky plywood counter with a taped-together pile of porn mags on it — some classy mover's housewarming gift to the just-moved-in. Gwen MacGregor takes the reference even further: She's numbered and photographed all 1,201 objects in her home, like an obsessive packer, then papered her locker with this record of her worldly goods.

And then there are the installations that ask you to get involved. Montrealer Richard Purdy has built up a little narrative in his space, pretending it was once the ascetic

home of a Buddhist holy man. A handout tells the story, and there's a flashlight to check out the murky, rug-lined depths of the dead saint's den. Andrew Forster, also from Montreal, asks you to climb onto a surreally morphed chair to don a pair of headphones and listen to a tape of off-key crooning — fun, but as perplexing as art can be.

None of these pieces may be worthy of too many words, deep thought or close looking. In fact, it may be best not even to think of them as independent works of art. They only speak when brought together, and hunted out one by one in their peculiar setting. (The depot's endless halls, with newly painted, brightly coloured doors, could themselves easily pass as the work of some well-funded installation artist.) Here, the curatorial project is the work of art, with each viewer's journey through it just one moment in a collaborative performance.

Moving & Storage is at Queen West Self Storage, 21 Ossington St., Toronto, noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday until May 30.