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PREVUE

# Behind the marks

## Denise Hawrysio reveals the stories of her etchings

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Without reading the text below each of the three prints in SNAP's gallery window, one could think you were looking at works following the tradition of abstraction, focused on the sanctity of the mark above all else. Abstraction made to celebrate and explore the subconscious and emotionally-created mark on the page could very well have been the art-making principle behind the print works in Denise Hawrysio's An Etching Plate Feels No Pain. The artist works beyond this visual referent instead, letting her viewers in on the less conventional stories behind the markings on her etching plates.

The text below the prints in SNAP's window reveal that the first plate's marks were created as it was released from the summit of Rundle Mountain where it slid all the way down. Its neighbour work was placed on a speed bump, its patterns and marks the result of being run over. It is interesting how being let in on the process behind these abstractions changes the looking relationship, allows for a thought-provoking consideration of both the formal qualities of each work—the tonal qualities, the expressive lines, how the eye moves—and the unusual and diverse processes behind their creation.

Prints in the main gallery space take this idea further, exploring the potential for storytelling and even autobiography when recording incidental and everyday markmaking. One small print reads, "latch marks from the door slamming in my face" below a mass of wide marks.

This visual evidence of this brief descriptor makes the imagined emotional impact of that latch with the slamming of the door all the more potent. Suddenly, these few abstract marks are embedded with meaning that sparks imagination. The few words that accompany each image encourage careful looking, an optical search to fill in more of the story.

In this process of storytelling with abstraction is a deliberate advocacy for the accessibility of art making. Hawrysio's prints are proof that markmaking of esthetic merit can come from the most unusual or banal experiences, and the accessibility of their creation is very high. The artist drives this message home in the placards that lean against the wall in the gallery which read, "EVERYBODY IS AN ARTIST." In the context of the exhibition, this idea is supported and complicated as her prints prove that people do not even require the intention to make art in order to do so. The man responsible for the marks that form the print described as "fingernail marks from the guy whose job I stole" likely has no idea he was responsible for a provocative work of art.

The art of the everyday has often been explored in conceptual art through investigations of banal gestures and rituals, but it is interesting to see what happens when this tradition is married with the power of formalism. The humour of this exhibition and the curiosity it inspires makes it a joy to experience the meaning embedded in these experiments with abstraction taken out of the studio and into the everyday.

*Until Jul 9*
*An Etching Plate Feels No Pain*
*Works by Denise Hawrysio*
*SNAP Gallery*