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Bev Pike's *Grottesque* opens at Dunlop Art Gallery

Grottesque, a new exhibition coming to Dunlop Art Gallery in January, depicts underground grottos and caves in colossal scale that can reach 20 feet in length and 8 feet in height. They tower over the viewer, who is surrounded and immersed in a fantasy world. Architectural elements, such as columns and arches, blend with fantasy in a series of scenes that echo science fiction, fairy tale, and fantasy all at once.

Established Winnipeg artist Bev Pike comes to the Dunlop Art Gallery with *Grottesque*, curated by Blair Fornwald. The exhibition features Pike's most recent series of monumental paintings, including her latest work, *Gazing Pond Chamber*, which has yet to be exhibited.

Pike is known for her immense gouache on paper paintings, in which bundles of fabric are arranged into compositions that simultaneously resemble landscapes, domestic spaces, and the cavernous, fleshy interiors of the body. Pike's paintings can each take over a year to complete.

For this most recent series, Pike travelled to England, visiting the extravagant artificial grottoes that were popular landscape features in the gardens of the elite. Decorated with crystal stalagmites, seashell mosaics, statues, and gazing pools, the spaces proved fruitful grounds for Pike's imagination.

"Although Pike references fanciful and decorative artificial grottoes from the architectural past and serene leisure sites like day spas in her work, her paintings are quite timely, and serious," says Fornwald. "To me, the idea of underground living conjures images of Cold War bomb shelters and the bunkers of modern doomsday preppers."

Pike's work has exhibited across Canada in solo and group exhibitions. Her work is held in the collections of the Canada Council Art Bank, the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, the Manitoba Arts Council Art Bank, Winnipeg Art Gallery, MacKenzie Art Gallery, and Robert McLaughlin Art Gallery, amongst others

Grottesque will be open from January 19 to March 25, at Central Gallery. An Artist Talk (ASL Interpreted), will take place on Friday, January 19, at 6:00 pm, at RPL Film Theatre, followed by a reception. Pike will be available for interviews on Thursday, January 17, in English or French.

Images:

Bev Pike, *Cavernous Sun Parlour*, 2016, gouache on paper. Photo: Robert Barrow, courtesy of the artist
Bev Pike, *Buried Dancing Pavilion*, 2015, gouache on paper. Photo: Robert Barrow, courtesy of the artist

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