

Andrew James Paterson

Never Enough Night

Adam Lauder

Reviews

Webzine

Andrew James Paterson



The clipped verses of a blackened lightbox poem greet visitors to Andrew James Paterson's eagerly anticipated retrospective at the plumb, a spacious artist-run space tucked in an alley off Toronto's Dufferin Street. Inside, vinyl colour bars strike the eye as a turntable spins no-wave riffs in an adjacent room. This convivial multimodality is characteristic of the platform-agnostic Paterson, whose career has spanned from fronting for The Government, Toronto's leading art band of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to his current transdisciplinary practice.

Vintage plaid furniture encourages deep listening to The Government's deceptively flippant lyrics and to tracks by Derwatt, Paterson's more recent musical collaboration with Kevin Dowler. The latter band name references the deceased painter at the centre of an art-forgery ring in Patricia Highsmith's psychological thriller *Ripley Under Ground*. Pulp-fiction clichés have been a sustaining fascination for Paterson, a renowned cinephile with eclectic taste that runs to the sunshine noir. In *Immortality* (1987), a video whose irreverent recycling of genre conventions harkens back to his no-wave roots, *Sunset Boulevard*'s iconic aging star Norma Desmond is reimagined as the chameleonic Norman Desmond. Screened as part of a nonstop 180-minute program synched to the gallery's opening hours, *Immortality* is replete with the baroque referentiality and narrative hairpin turns that are signatures of Paterson's early output.





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Never Enough Night, exhibition views, the plumb, Toronto, 2024.

Photos: courtesy of the plumb, Toronto

The sharp-tongued verbal play of the two-monitor *Rectangular World* (2006) is representative of Paterson's more recent exploration of the social discontents of modernism as filtered through an echo chamber of art-world chatter. Paterson's thrifty wordsmithing is perfectly attuned to the funky geometry of paintings and videos that nimbly unsettle formalism's restrictive claims on abstraction. This reductive turn is on full display in lists that take their inspiration as much from the vernacular conceptualisms of alt-rock lyrics and joe-job inventories as from high-art

list-making is the cut-vinyl *My Memoir!* (2023), which compresses his storied biography into a terse succession of cryptic notations.



who has outlived his early no-wave provocateur image to make significant contributions to artist-run culture in Toronto. It is this spirit of generosity that makes his retrospective such a timely fit for the community-building ambitions of the plumb, whose driving DIY ethos is a welcome tonic in a moment defined by institutional equivocation.

With a PhD from the University of Toronto earned in 2016, Adam Lauder has taught courses on Canadian art at OCAD University and the University of Toronto. In 2018, he organized an exhibition of Rita Letendre’s public art at YYZ Artists’ Outlet.

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