

Proof that buildings are not inanimate objects

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We don't often run across drawn plans for a "laboratory with launching fuel flow meter attached to a micromesh double-fueler fructification tower." But Sara Graham has just the thing at p/m Gallery.

As an artist, Graham is both visionary and cheeky. So there's a 101 per-cent chance that the laboratory — part of her series, Bromley's Bluff — doesn't exist outside of her plans and whatever imagination the viewer brings to them. Yet her craftily ambiguous drawing elucidates perfectly the entire exhibition it's in: "Buildings That Spin."

For co-curator Malka Greene, the title itself comes specifically from a condo in Curitiba, Brazil constructed in such a way that each of its 11 floors can rotate according to the wishes of its occupants. That led Greene and co-curator Eve Townsend to consider the "motions" architecture goes through once the buildings begin to age and are altered due to their surrounding environments.

"Do (the buildings) in fact remain static?" she wonders.

Evidently not, according to the other artists in the show that provides a series of perky surprises from beginning to end.

To start, there's Grace M. Chan's eight-step easy guide How to Make Your Own Building Spin in 8 Easy Steps (2006), typed out neatly on a card. "Position yourself in middle of room standing," goes Step One in a routine that eventually asks the viewer to "whirl around really fast 23 times," a process that inevitably will lead to the impression that the building is indeed spinning.

In his three handsomely sombre black-and-white photographs in Stamped on These Lifeless Things, Saskatoon-raised artist Christopher Allen looks at the effects of "disintegration and corrosion," on the façade of what appears to be a worn old apartment building. A caustic coal-black smudge disfigures the image of an exterior metal stairway leading to a second-storey window. Allen's point: This blackened symbol of rot and decay becomes the building's image.

Kim Adams' pair of miniature sculptures, The Fishing Unit and The Carving Unit, both depict tiny mobile leisure worlds as intricate as miniature medieval reliquaries. Complete with tiny action figures each unit reveals symbols of contemporary modes of devotion such as sport fishing and driving the family RV.

Dieter Janssen's mysterious Iceland House contemplates the building as evolving memory. In Africville: Place of Memory, architect Robert Osbourne's gorgeous, curvilinear architectural drawings of Seaview Park, reveal a new development plunked down on the very spot where the generations-old Afro-Canadian Nova Scotia community had existed until 1969. (1159 Dundas St. E., unit 149 until Aug. 25.)

– Peter Goddard