



Peel Bros

PIEN, Ed

L.

Bryon Johnson/Metroland

Artist Ed Pien stands in front of his art piece, 'Our Beloved', 2016, a collection of 144 framed digital prints, at the Art Gallery of Mississauga.

AGM exhibit explores themes of trauma and loss

CHRIS CLAY

cclay@mississauga.net

MN Dec 8, 2016

At first glance, artist Ed Pien's piece 'Our Beloved' seems to be a series of close-up photographs of brightly-coloured flowers.

However, upon deeper examination, it becomes clear that many of them are starting to wilt and shrivel and are well on their way to death. Other pictures are not of flowers at all, but are of dolls and other little mementos that have begun to crack and peel due to time and exposure to the elements.

There are 144 photos in all that were taken during Pien's time in Santiago, Chile and are from a cemetery that is dedicated to the political dissidents and other Chileans who were murdered and disappeared during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

Kendra Ainsworth is curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Mississauga and said the piece, part of the 'Shadowed Land' exhibit that continues until Jan. 1., highlights many of the exhibition's overarching themes.

Ainsworth said Pien uses 'Shadowed Land' to explore how ideas of trauma and loss affects us as individuals, but also can cast a longer shadow over a land or country.

Trauma from war or totalitarian political regimes are often difficult to represent, said Ainsworth, and Pien attempts to do so without forcing the victims to relive these events. He feels it is important work as they are often topics of great seriousness that deserve discussion and should

not be forgotten lest history repeat itself.

The flowers in his piece symbolize the physical human form and show how our bodies are fragile and fleeting. But, they also represent how the dead still live on through the memories of loved ones and friends.

Also part of the exhibition is the looped video projection 'Presente'. It uses images of flowers from the cemetery with images of the hundreds of murdered or missing Canadian indigenous women flashing briefly on the screen in a way that is almost imperceptible to the human eye.

"Ed thought this was poignant ... as it calls to mind that these women were not as visible to us (as a society) as they should have been," said Ainsworth.

The piece that truly caught the curator's attention and made her want to bring the artist in for a solo exhibit was 'Over and Over'. It is based on a long-term research project Pien has been doing in Cuba where he speaks to seniors about their life stories and what it was like to live under the yoke of Fidel Castro.

One of the things he found was that when he played music it helped spark memories in his interview subjects.

Pien uses a number of record players on a loop that are set to skip over certain parts of the album. Some are playing at normal speed while others are not, and it creates an "unearthly cacophony of noise and potential memories."

Ainsworth notes that records can often scratch and get stuck in loops and, for those with traumatic memories, a trigger can cause them to repeat those memories in a hellish loop in their own minds.