

Trio of artists open show Saturday

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The current cheap chestnut advising people to "Go big or go home" seems to have delightfully inspired them equally. Browne and Vander Vennen, in the main room at the Cobourg gallery, and Stanley, in the Paul Kane Gallery, are exhibiting large pieces making bold statements.

Browne is reprising her study of a beefy-shouldered ceramic stallion that resides in her studio and iconic bowl shapes whose shadowy contours seem to reach deep into timelessness.

Spontaneity, working from the gut rather than from the head, immersed in the complexity of life's patterns within and without, Browne says she wants the viewers' eyes to "penetrate into space and race over the surface on different levels."

Browne's work is all about energy. Where the horse imagery is a medium to express feelings of power and playful strength, the bowl images are passive, receiving, static, more about acceptance and the creep of darkness over surfaces.

Vander Vennen's work has literally grown for this show. Created this year, her pieces offer large rich tapestries of textures and lines due to the use of new, recycled and found objects. Those who take pleasure in the ongoing narrative she creates with her choices of materials and texture will delight in this show, as Vander Vennen is onto cannibalizing her second piano for parts.

The artist says that when she is creating she is balanced between childlike intensity and a level of sophistication that has nothing to do with rational explanation.

As if to prove that point, Vander Vennen -- perhaps in tribute but more likely in playfulness -- has included cut-up bits of Browne's work, a sort of "Where's Waldo" for viewers.

Still, Vander Vennen says she is a serious person.

"I strive to have my art speak as a celebration of the human spirit in relation to its creator whether from secret spaces or the most flamboyant expressions," she says.

Pat Stanley has taken big artistic steps in the past year. At a showing in Toronto last year, her work portrayed unfinished spaces. This year depth, assurance and focused statement are in the forefront of her work. A series paintings showing the structure of the Gardiner Expressway has been underpainted in a such a manner as to suggest the aggression of entropy, and together with the overlying images portrays convincing worn-out infrastructure images indicative of post-civilization.

