



Friendship house: a view from Girling's Vancouver apartment.

\$750-\$11,500. Until Oct. 27, 1092
Queen St. W., Toronto;
416-516-1232.

Chris Rogers at Bailey Fine Arts

What lends these big, confident, abstract paintings their striking sense of contemporaneity is the way in which their backgrounds are cunningly contrived to echo the performance of certain cosmic events: nebulae explode, chunks of space matter go screaming off into nothingness, that sort of thing — a kind of hip, quasi-scientific echoing of the opening-credit scenes from *Star Trek* or *Voyager*.

But what lends them their value as paintings is the way this young-turk Toronto artist has superimposed on his slick, speedy, galaxy-like grounds, nosegays of coagulated pigment — plush, planetary whorls of paint so skillfully and so generously applied they look like painted blossoms by Manet or Fantin-Latour which have somehow been launched into the greater universe.

Much given, in the construction of these space-blooms, to the employment of creamy pinks, pinkish creams, buttery yellows and glandular mauves, Rogers clearly possesses an unabashed love of painting that handily offsets the otherwise rather calculated effects of his obviously ambitious paintings. However meteoric a trajectory Rogers has here laid out for his career, it's good to see that he's going to take the old-fashioned pleasures of sensuous painting with him.

The paintings range from \$7,500 to \$10,000, but the show is sold out. Until Oct. 5, 594 Spadina Ave., Toronto; 416-819-3354.

Robin Styba at Propeller Gallery

This is your last day, alas, to see these soft, beautiful photographs of swans. I know, I know, it all sounds pretty sentimental — some pictorial equivalent to Saint-Saëns's *The Swan* from his *Carnival of the Animals*, maybe, or a visual incarnation of Sibelius's *The Swan of Tuonela*.

But despite being lumbered with a wall-text from the *Upanishads*, which talks a lot about bliss and luminous consciousness, this exhibition of large black and white photographs is an innocent delight. Styba, a Toronto-based photographer, calls the exhibition *Patient Destination* — which is very pretty and apt.

The photographs are of swans and of swans only — no shore-bound context, no passing boats, no gleefully paddling children. Styba's swans are isolated on the water.

Sometimes, the swans are front and centre, close-up miasmas of grey-white, bobbing on pearlescent water.

Sometimes — indeed it feels as if this goes on almost while you watch — the light leaks away into utter blackness and Styba's swans become imprecise fluffs of light in the dark, swan-like patches of illumination, errant clouds moving over the face of the waters.

Two stunning, very large photographs (1.2 metres by 1.8 metres) dominate the exhibition: Here the swans are intensities of brief, vulnerable, feathery white light, isolated against an immense, unrelenting night.

\$750-\$10,000. Closes today, 984 Queen St. W., Toronto; 416-504-7142.