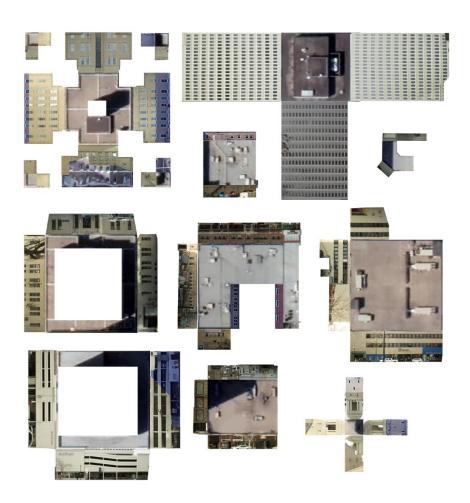
Conceptual Photography by William Bessai-Saul

Welcome to the Yellow Argyle Art Garage (YAAG) where this year's pop up gallery is a collection of conceptual photography by William Bessai-Saul as part of the Cathedral Village Arts Festival.

Thursday May 23, 2024, 7:00 pm 2261 Argyle Street (in the alley behind the house) ONE NIGHT ONLY

What is conceptual photography?

Conceptual art in general is art in which the idea and context behind what the work is communicating is more important that the material qualities of the work itself. This is in contrast to abstract art (or instance) in which it is all about shape, colour, etc. (where there is nothing to "get" aside from just looking at it).



What is going on in this exhibition?

The right-most print in the garage contains six photographs of a figure standing on a pier wearing a plague mask. This was shot around sunset during an excursion into marsh land. This was a set of self-portraits with the camera triggered by a remote which meant that I did not know the framing of the images, which was further complicated by my wearing of the mask. The series is a narrative but the narrative is internal and therefore indecipherable to viewers who can only see the external figure.

In the middle of the long wall is a prototype into my forays into 2.5 Dimensional which advanced in my BFA exhibition earlier this year. When photographs are taken of a building, that photograph is from a particular perspective which introduces distortions into the shape of the structure. What I have done here is extracted, amalgamated and re-storted this city block from a series of photographs, hatching together what I've taken myself and using the ever-seeing eye of Google Earth to fill in the gaps.

The next work is a series of photographs from the gizzard of artifice. These spaces are areas of buildings that are regularly used by people but are not intended to be seen by anyone. There are areas of buildings intended for the public eye and are therefore built with a deliberate aesthetic and there are these spaces which occupy a purely utilitarian intention. They do not have a "look" but a look emerges anyway – from the vacuum of chaos. The arrangement of boxes in a store room cannot be said to have come from pure human vision nor is it any way natural. It is the kind of unthinking artifice one takes away when looking at a bird's next or a beaver's dam. This work is especially prescient today for showing hidden areas of places like the Regina Central Building and the old Sear's Bargain Centre, both of which are slated to be demolished in the near future.

At the back wall of the garage are a series created in the early wild west days of artificial intelligence. I was intrigued by Al's capacity to create vaguely wistful and melancholy quotes that don't really say anything. I got the machine to generate a string of sentences talking about a city and then I paired them with a bunch of snap shots I took while walking around my neighbourhood. The gallery viewers natural instinct narrative takes these two random gimbals and combines them into something apparently profound or even political.