

# ANAT EBGI

## REGINA LEADER-POST

**Tammi Campbell's first solo show is in 'cultural Mecca' Regina**

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**Tammi Campbell stands in front of one of her pieces from her exhibit Abstraction and Empathy at the MacKenzie Art Gallery. PHOTO BY MICHAEL BELL /Regina Leader-Post**

It's fitting that Tammi Campbell's first solo art exhibition is at the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

Though she has lived in Saskatoon for nearly two decades, Campbell came to admire the Queen City while growing up in Moose Jaw.

"Regina had always been kind of a cultural Mecca for me as a youth," said Campbell. "Every first big cultural thing for me happened in Regina."

From her first concert (Skid Row and Aerosmith) to her first play (at the Globe Theatre) to shopping at World of Trout, "Regina was kind of the first big city that I knew," she said with a laugh. "It sounds kind of silly."

Campbell's exhibition Abstraction and Empathy, which opened in late April, explores "the idea of what a painting could be and what a painting is."

It's a theme she has developed over the years as her interest in modernist and monochrome artwork has grown.

In this particular exhibition, the canvases are covered in acrylic paint, but they don't look like it.

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The paint is made to look like bubble wrap, poly, cardboard and masking tape — items that would normally protect a painting as it's being shipped or stored.

The method is meant to “highlight the object of a painting,” said Campbell.

“Usually, painting is seen as kind of a window into another world in some ways, so you're getting to observe something or see something, and it's intended to ignore the structure or the object that the image is on,” Campbell said.

“I'm really trying to push the object to the front and centre and play around with what a painting could be and what the possibility of a painting is.”

Campbell calls this project “one stop on the quest of working through a lifetime focus on what a painting can be.”

She asks the questions, “What makes a painting a painting? What is the life of a painting? When is a painting not a painting? How can something read as a painting and not be visible?”

It's meant to push people's imaginations and encourage them to take a slower look.

“It's quite easy to assume one thing and move on quickly,” said Campbell, “but it takes a bit more to actually really start looking and see maybe things that are a little bit off with what you're looking at.”

The “cardboard,” for example, is not zigzag from a side view — it's bumpy.

“There's all these little tips ... that hint there's something off,” said Campbell. “It takes another step to really start asking questions about what people are looking at.

“I know it's not for everyone, but there is a reward in it if you're really open to seeing things,” she added.

“I like that, slow reads — which is uncommon now with visuals, because everything's so quick and accessible on your phone and iPad and computer, where you're just kind of clicking-clicking through everything.”

Abstraction and Empathy is on at the MacKenzie Art Gallery through Sept. 4.