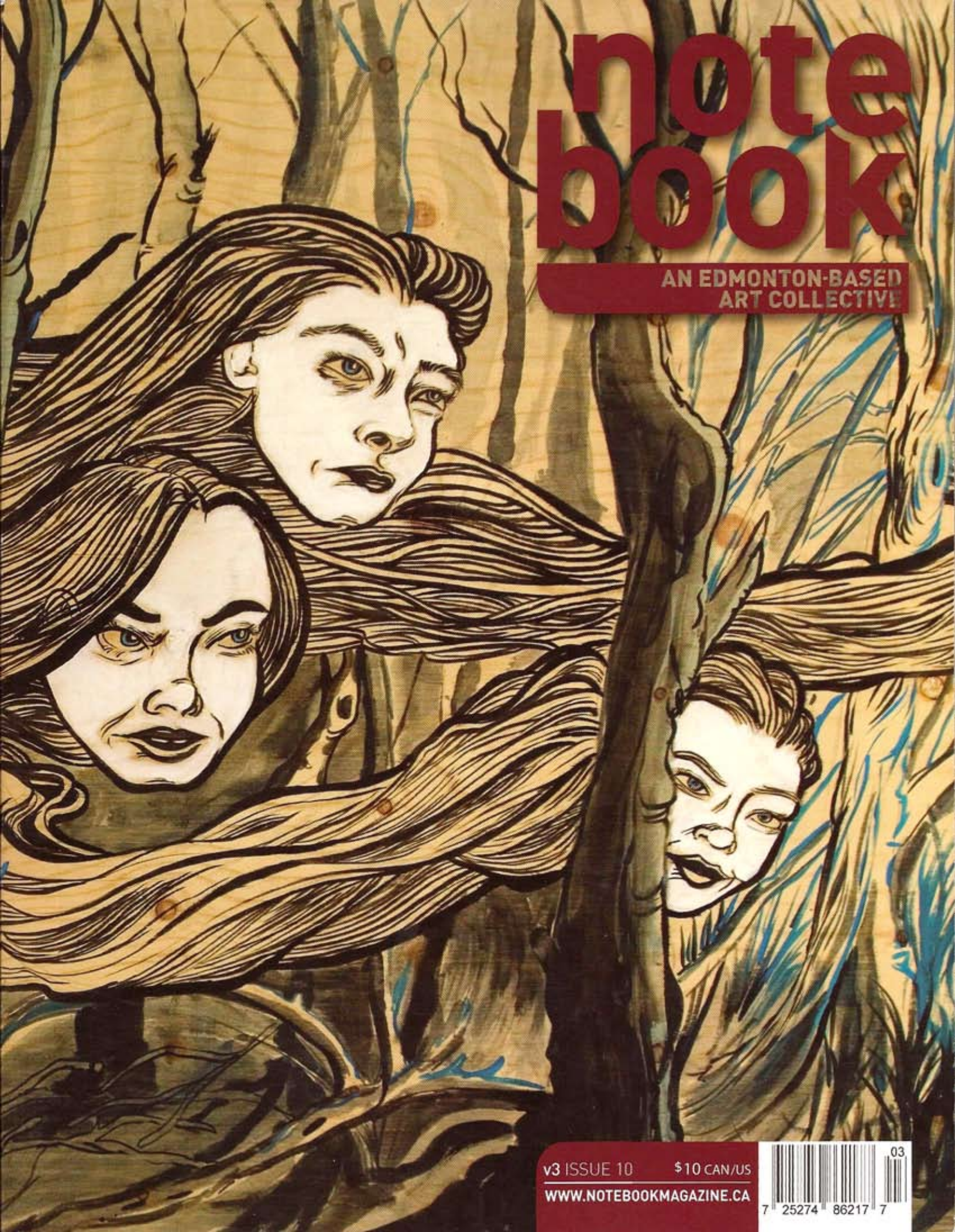


# notebook

AN EDMONTON-BASED  
ART COLLECTIVE



v3 ISSUE 10 \$10 CAN/US

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# campbellWALLACE

INTERVIEW BY JILL STANTON

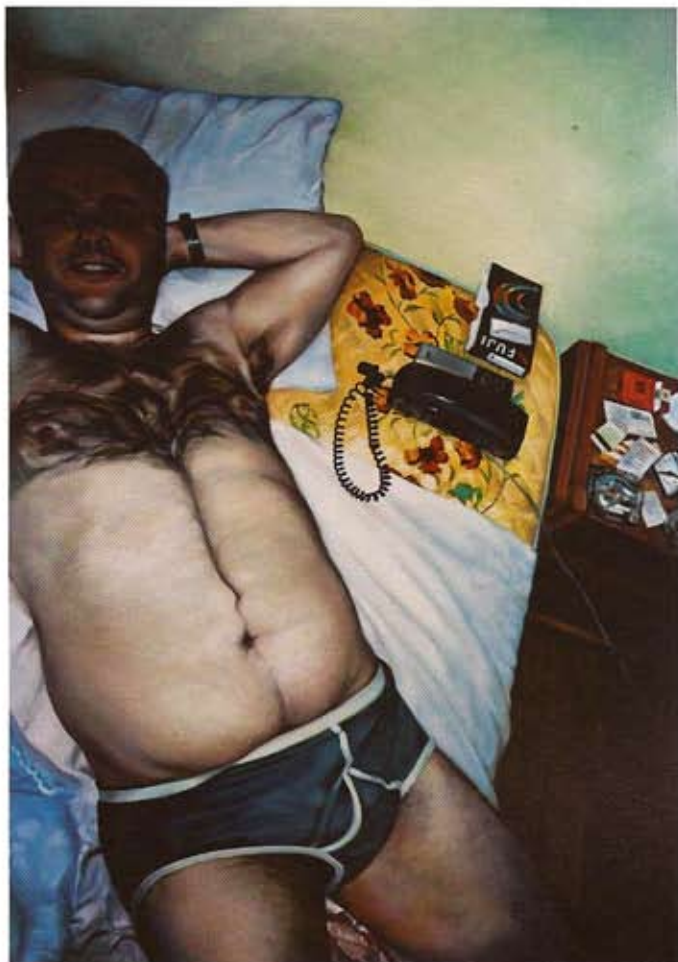
*You obviously paint from snapshots. How important is it to you that the portraits capture the exact essence of the individual, or do you use the photographs mainly as references?*

I began this series of paintings using found photographs that I knew very little about. The photos were used as reference points, and I was trying to recreate the photo with all its flaws in order to elevate the image from something discarded into something worthy of a person's notice. However, I can't help but attach my own associations to the individuals I'm painting. If they remind me of a family member, friend, or maybe somebody famous, my perception dictates what direction the painting takes. Lately, as the work has evolved, I'm also more likely to push the images, updating older pictures I've scavenged in antique stores and thrift shops and altering images collected from the Internet. The original photographs have changed from being the focal point of my painting to the basis on which I create a new image.

*I'm drawn to the amount of excruciatingly rendered textures in your paintings — the knitted surfaces, in particular. They seem to have had almost the same amount of attention as the faces. Is texture a major part of your portraiture?*

When I was still working regularly from live models, I was focusing more on the figure and less on drapery and background. It was too easy sometimes (particularly when drawing) to ignore what was surrounding and supporting the model. When I began these portraits, I had to force myself to really observe fabric. I had to paint the surrounding areas first and then reward myself with the main focus, the figure. I couldn't afford to ignore specific textures anymore because the photos wouldn't allow me to — they never changed. Over time, fabric and textures have become almost as rewarding for me to paint as flesh. I've never knitted with actual wool, but I'm sure it must be the same bizarre combination of intense concentration and relaxation as it is to knit with paint.





CAMPBELL WALLACE | **LUCKY PIERRE** | OIL ON CANVAS | 61.5"X42" | 2003



CAMPBELL WALLACE | **OPHELIA** | OIL ON CANVAS | 48"X32" | 2009



CAMPBELL WALLACE | **A DOOR** | OIL ON CANVAS | 40"X60" | 2005

*Are the people in the photographs ones that you know? How do you choose an individual for a portrait?*

When I started I wanted the portraits to be of completely unknown people, but I now work from images of friends and family as well. The main thing I look for is the visual impact of the person — how he or she appears, his or her expression, and how this person's situation could be interpreted. Composition, colour, and other formal aspects are also considered, as well as if I think it would be a challenging or fun portrait to paint. I focus less on who the subject of the painting is and more on how that person's image affects me.

*Is narrative a big part of what you do? Are you interested in the viewer reading some sort of story from your work?*

Narrative is a very important consideration for me. I hope my paintings can be read like partial stories. If an image doesn't begin to tell me something immediately, I don't usually give it a second look. If I see a theme, I try to push that in little ways as the painting progresses. I'm interested in making each portrait a document of an unknown person's life and allowing the viewer to relate to that life, to interpret the story in their own way. I like starting a painting in the same position as the person who will eventually look at it.

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CAMPBELL WALLACE | **THE CURSE** | OIL ON CANVAS | 42"X48" | 2007



CAMPBELL WALLACE | **THE ALBERTAN** | OIL ON CANVAS | 22"X26" | 2009



CAMPBELL WALLACE | **THE TEMPEST** | OIL ON CANVAS | 36"X36" | 2008