

Riot of colour creates a 'dance on canvas'

Montrealer paints to the music of Britney Spears, Lily Allen

VISUAL ARTS PREVIEW

Jean-Gabriel
Lambert:
An exhibition
of new work

Where: West End Gallery,
12308 Jasper Ave.
When: Until Sept. 30

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Walking into the exhibition of Jean-Gabriel Lambert's new work is akin to diving into a sea of intense, vibrant colour — deeply saturated jewel tones, earthy hues and splashy metallics.

But it's not just the colours that draw the viewer into the work. It's the movement. Lambert's richly textured paintings are alive; gestural trails from the extra-wide palette knife sweep layers of thick paint across the canvas. The effect, almost 3-D in places, is engaging and somewhat theatrical, as if a dancer or mime had a go with the paint.

It is no coincidence that elements of performance resonant in Lambert's work. He's a professionally trained actor, a dancer and at home both on-

stage or a film set. "I dance on my canvas, I am performing. I let go," he explains.

Using a huge brush, Lambert lays down the acrylic paint. Then he turns on the music — "I need the beat" — and goes to work with his oversized palette knife, mixing and blending the colours.

"I am moving all the time," he says. "It is very physical."

This year's work was created to the pulse of Britney Spears. Now British pop singer Lily Allen is keeping Lambert company in his Montreal studio.

Lambert has always been an abstract painter, but a trip to Puerto Vallarta 10 years ago was a turning point in his work. "I fell in love with the place and the people. The sky is always blue, and there is so much colour in their crafts and buildings."

When he returned to Montreal, he began using yellows, reds and oranges.

Before long, Lambert's work was hanging in Galleria Dante, Puerto Vallarta's largest gallery of fine art. That was the beginning of his yearly trek to Mexico, a

chance to explore the country and be inspired by the colours and light.

"I go every year for three or four months. At the end of March," he says. "I am happy to return to my studio in Montreal because it is easy to paint. I have all this energy in me. It's a recipe, and it works every year."

During a holiday in Puerto Vallarta, West End Gallery

owners Dan and Lana Hudon discovered Lambert's work at the Galleria Dante and felt an immediate connection to the work. "The colours are appealing," says Dan Hudon, "and the work is not difficult to understand."

This show, Lambert's second at the West End Gallery, is the first of five in five months across Canada and in Mexico. To meet the intense demands, he created 73 paintings in five months.

With titles in English, French or Spanish, all the paintings have a story. Last winter, Lambert witnessed the activity of El Fuego, Mexico's most active volcano, in Colima: "El Fuego, which means 'fire,' was puff-

ing ... Can you imagine the colours?"



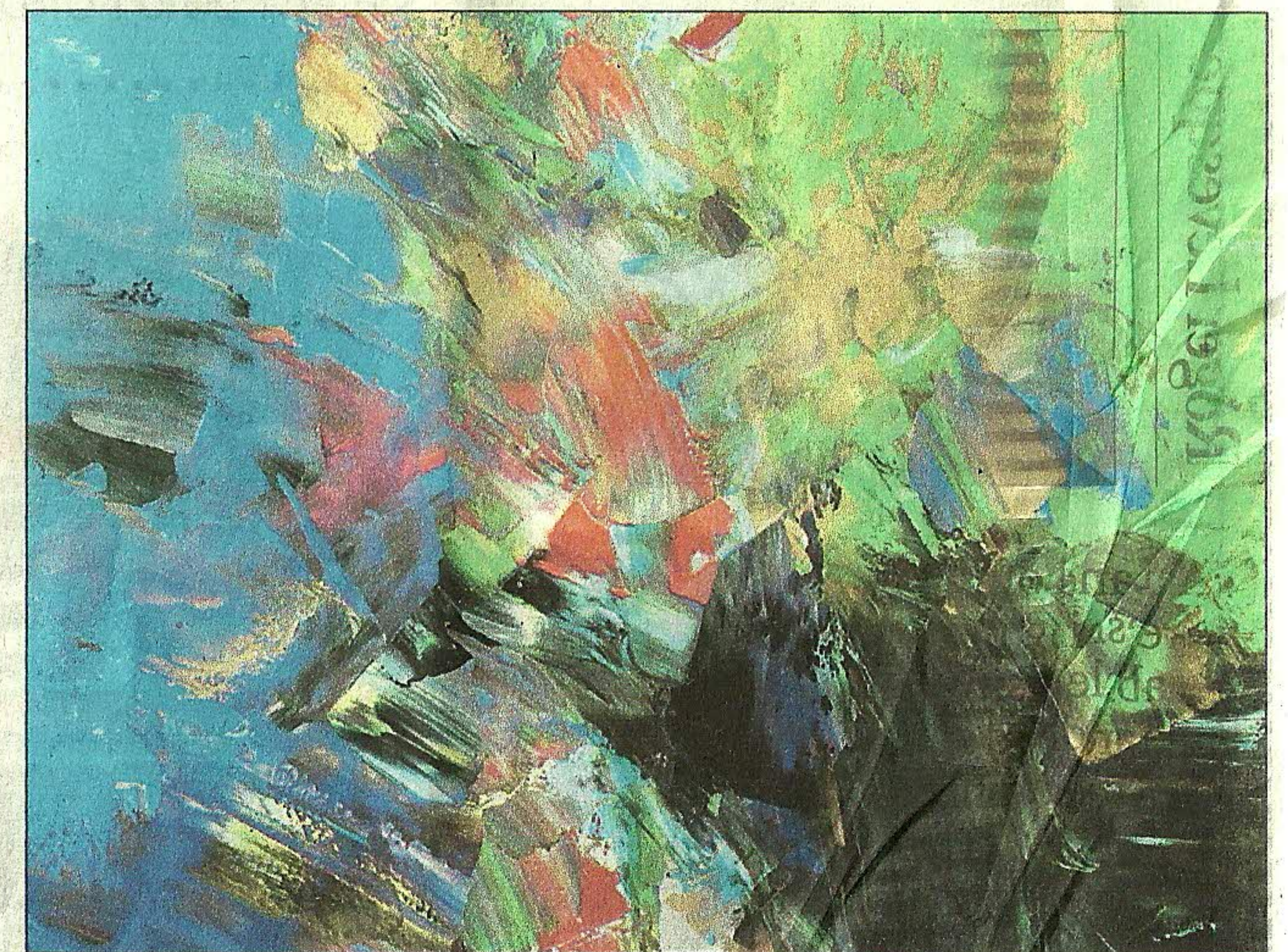
PHOTOS: SUPPLIED, WEST END GALLERY

El Fuego #3, acrylic, 36 inches square, is named after Mexico's most active volcano.

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El Fuego #3, part of a series that captures that moment, glows warmly in yellow, gold, orange and hints of red. Accents of bronze and copper add light and signify the fire in the volcano.

Blooming, rich in red, cobalt and earth tones, commemorates spring in Montreal, while *Spectaculaire #4*, a canvas of purple, green and gold, honours Lambert's first larger-sized painting. The name came about because he thought it looked "spectacular." Indeed, it does.



Spectaculaire #4, acrylic, 48 inches square