

# The Way I Are

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Confusion and attraction are, for some, factors leading to a tawdry one-night stand, but for Katie Bethune-Leamen they form the basis of her latest exhibition at UTM's Blackwood Gallery. *The Way I Are* is an amalgamation of a number of works that, though possessing individual visual aesthetic in many different mediums, are able to explore and investigate existing artistic vernacular.

*The Way I Are* arose out of a sort-of serendipitous moment for Bethune-Leamen, who drew inspiration for her project upon listening to a Timbaland song, also entitled "They Way I Are." She enjoyed the song but also found that it was nearly impossible to explain her appreciation of it to others. This difficulty arose mainly from the language, or manipulation of language, that the song employed. The "slang" in the song was as unfamiliar as it was appealing, and this confusion became a pleasurable, albeit frustrating experience for her. Fittingly, all the works in the exhibition presented this same moment of pleasant perplexity for Bethune-Leamen.

The exhibition is comprised of the work of ten artists including Robert Fones, John Massey, and Tony Romano. Despite the lack of obvious cohesion between the works, it is easy to see how Bethune-Leamen could be captivated by each one. They all seem to possess endearing qualities that stimulate the eye in a way that is, at first unexplainable but soon becomes, enamoring.

Fones' *Leviathan #5* (2008) is one of the exhibition's more grand (in terms of sheer size) works. The colour photograph, laminated on aluminium, displays one seventh of the complete work, *Leviathan*, when seen in completeness spells out the beginning lines of Thomas Hobbes' text of the same title.

What may be most intriguing about Fones' *Leviathan #5* is the typography in which the lines are written. Designed and hand-painted by Fones, the letterforms are highly stylized and organic, but visually condensed with no spaces between the words – only between each character.

Seeing only one of the seven panels that make up Fones' *Leviathan* may make it difficult to grasp the overall concept of the work, but there is indeed an immediate, albeit abstract attraction. Is it the skewed play between both form and representation? Or is it because the letterforms have some resemblance to the body of the metaphorical *Leviathan* that Thomas Hobbes claimed would protect the social compact? It's not easy to answer. Although, what we can see is that the manipulation of language, similar to Timbaland's song, is attractive, but hard to delineate.

Tony Romano's video installation, *The Last Act*, pushes the boundaries of the artistic vernacular as well. The film's script is taken from a pornographic film, but the accompanying sex scenes from the original film have been removed, leaving only the usually, for lack of

a better word, shitty written dialogue that, let's be serious, no one ever really pays attention to. Romano's film recontextualizes the words of the original script and makes them seem ever more awkward. Once again, the observer is faced with a reworking of language that draws us in.

*The Way I Are* is an extremely personal exhibition. Although the pieces may, at first, seem scattered and void of a common thread, it is the emotional response to the exhibition as a whole that connects everything together. Inspired by Katie Bethune-Leamen's personal reactions to the works, the exhibition allows for one's own personal reactions to infiltrate the walls of the gallery, and allows its viewers to attempt to find their own explanation for their own attraction.

## CD REVIEW



Memoira  
Memoira

LUCAS DI MASCIO

As the dark haired beauty's mysterious eyes stare out at you from Memoira's self-titled debut album cover, the thought that she might be a front woman of a goth metal band may never cross your mind. The genre of women-fronted metal/rock bands is often divided by and classified according to operatic symphony metal (Nightwish, Sirenia) and goth/alternative rock (Evanescence).

Not surprisingly, Memoira does follow the stereotypical trend, but they do so by combining elements of both symphony and goth/alternative music.

It's clear that the band is influenced by the female-fronted bands mentioned above, but thankfully, unlike the bands above, the guitar riffs are much more fleshed out and have more of a progressive feel – it isn't just overused heavy chugging or an overabundance of synth parts. The keyboards on Memoira's album are also very fitting to the music, ranging from ethereal synth effects to classical piano.

There are some issues however with a few of the tracks. At times the vocals seem too soft and have so much reverb on them that it's hard to hear the singer's voice clearly. And it doesn't help that the male backup vocals aren't mixed loud enough to be heard. Another bizarre issue is that the order of the tracks and some of the lyrics in the booklet do not match what is on the CD. Has this ever happened before?

Of course, as the genre is known for, some of the tracks start to sound alike due to the vocals. They are done well and the male backing vocals are skilfully sparse and thus

not overused, but the songs start to get dull vocal-wise. Again, that is the case with the genre – these issues seem to always come with the territory.

There are nine tracks on the album, the first one instrumental. Tracks that stand out from the rest include "Haunted," a great heavy track with wraith-like keyboard pieces and catchy vocal melodies from both female and male singers. "Incurable" has great guitar riffs during the chorus to pump you up and dreamlike lead parts during the verses which serve as a calm before the storm. "Liberation" is an interesting track – some of the verses are completely bass with very quiet vocals and some symphonic keyboards are used during the bridges.

The album is definitely a good start for the band and really appeals those interested in the genre. Memoira is similar to other female-fronted bands, but much heavier than most will ever let themselves become. This album is highly recommended for fans of Lacuna Coll, Evanescence, and Sirenia.

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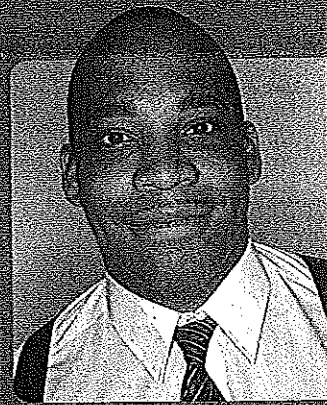
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