

THE STAR

VISUAL ARTS

In Studio: Sky Glabush, A New Garden



By **Murray Whyte** Visual Arts Critic

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If there's a rule to be followed with Sky Glabush, the London-based polymath whose work has ever been a moving target of material and form, it's to not be surprised by anything. In his studio, a skylit expanse of concrete and white recently aglow with the cool light of a cloud-filled sky above, the array of projects scattered throughout bore out the point: here, little pottery experiments, partially finished; there, an easel fitted with an almost-done self-portrait in thick, dark oils; off to one side, a full-size loom, where he executes his painterly weavings, knitting colour and form through the homespun medium into art.

"It's a bit much sometimes, to be honest," chuckled Glabush recently, sorting through a stack of weavings bound for Toronto and his gallery, MKG127, where a new exhibition of his work opens Saturday.

It's tempting to think Glabush, who is 46, bores easily; closer to the truth is the artist's simple aversion to safe havens, as unfamiliar paths beckon with the allure of new knowledge and experience. With the weavings, he says, "I was thinking about growth; enacting a kind of question, physically, in the studio that forces you to think about tradition and history, and a gesture that's really about learning."

The show, aptly titled "A New Garden," is Glabush in that particular nutshell: a powerful thirst for new ways of making while seeing the old afresh. The loom landed in his space by happenstance — discarded, a freebie — and led to a whole new way of working. But also here is a suite of small, soulful paintings, the first he's made in three years or more. It's a reproach, yes, but with a clean slate.

"If I can't finish one in one sitting — two, maybe three hours — I do that to them," he says, nodding toward a stack of small canvases, scraped all but clean. "It's more about a feeling, an experience, than an intention," he says. "Sometimes, I think you just have to take the risk."

Sometimes? For Glabush, risk is the element that knits his wide-ranging oeuvre together. May it ever be so.