

GREATER TORONTO > 10 TO WATCH

JENNIFER MARMAN AND DANIEL BORINS INSTALLATION ARTISTS


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 VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

Canada has seen its share of art star couples. Think of painters Christopher and Mary Pratt, or the married sound-art gurus Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller. Now add Daniel Borins and Jennifer Marman to the list.

Just check out the couple's sched-

ule for the coming year. "The Presence Meter" (2003) — their modernist wall sculpture, with its grid work of tiny meters responding to the approaching viewer — has just been installed for a year's run at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, where the duo will be in a major group show, "Caught in the Act: The Viewer as Performer," opening on

Oct. 11, 2008.

On Jan. 10, Marman and Borins open "Wha Happened?" at Gallery TPW on Ossington Ave., a photo- and video-based show reflecting their fondness for commercially made kitsch (would you believe, a matching pair of plastic bonsai plants?).

They're exhibiting minimalist

work at Art Santa Fe, where they've had sales success during two past appearances, from July 10 to 13. "We have more patrons in the American Southwest than we do in Toronto," says Borins. Their month-long second Toronto solo show opens on Nov. 22 at Diaz Contemporary on Niagara St., and then, in spring 2009, they're in a

group show at the Art Gallery of York University.

As if this robust workload weren't daunting enough — "we work all the time," says Marman, "12 hours a day, seven days a week" — they'll shortly begin work on a public sculpture commissioned by the TTC for the Downsview subway stop, due later this year.

"They have the ability to understand what's going on today and to bring in a lot of pop cultural references," says National Gallery contemporary curator, Josée Drouin-Brisebois. "They create encounters with the viewer."

Marman and Borins are one of those odd couples who go wonderfully well together. At 32, she's model-lean, incapable of a bad fashion moment and totally organized. He, meanwhile, is 33, tall and rumped, a bit soft around the middle and discreetly intellectual. They could be the art star and the young professor.

Both born in Toronto, they met in 1999 during their third year at the Ontario College of Art & Design. Until last spring both had straight, non-art jobs.

Marman was doing media planning for an advertising firm. Borins was creative director at the artist-friendly Drake Hotel.

"At first we were romantically a couple; now it's just professional," says Borins.

"Any partnership is a fluid thing. But we've always found facing the world is an incredibly easy thing when we do it together."