

VISUAL ARTS » REVIEW

GARY MICHAEL DAULT
GALLERY GOING

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JOAN KAUFMAN
AT THE REDHEAD GALLERY

.....
\$200-\$2,500. Until May 23,
401 Richmond St. W., Toronto;
416-504-5654

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Kaufmann's exhibition, *Suspended*, is the first show employing colour photography and video for this accomplished artist whose medium, hitherto, has been black-and-white still photography. Kaufman takes to colour – and to video – admirably well.

Her 5:57 minute video, *Fly in a Jar on a Wire* is a visually truncated, effectively claustrophobic work in which a tightly cropped tightrope walker (you can see only her feet) prances about on the taut wire, her sense of mastery clearly compromised by the fact that the space allowed to her is resolutely curtailed by a frame around the video. "While the performer should feel free and in control," Kaufman writes in her artist's statement, "trapped like a fly in a sealed jar, she kicks and bangs at the edges unable to escape. Never reaching the end of the wire and never returning to the beginning, she is suspended in an unrelenting predicament." As are we all, or so go the work's implications.

Much of *Suspended* is given over, imagistically, to the presiding genius of magician and escape artist Harry Houdini, whose presence makes itself felt in Kaufman's video *Houdini and the Red Suspenders* and in the exquisite, altar-like colour photo of a blond woman in a red dress floating gracefully in midair – a photo-reframing of the famous levitation trick so beloved of magicians. The exhibition is about gravity and its cessation. And given Kaufman's compelling way with visual metaphor, it is also about gravitas.