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PAINTED LIVES & SHIFTING LANDSCAPES

By Richard Tetrault. Anvil Press.
160 pp. \$42. softcover.

◆ The most striking characteristic of Richard Tetrault's art is its integrity of purpose. Painter, printmaker, muralist, and public-art advocate, Tetrault is deeply committed to his chosen community, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Painted Lives & Shifting Landscapes: Paintings, Prints and Murals* attempts an overview of his career in light of this connection to place, resulting in a richly illustrated publication that looks and reads much like an exhibition catalogue. (It might be seen to function belatedly as such for his 25-year retrospective, which was mounted at the Interurban in 2003.)

Essays of appreciation have been contributed by curator and community worker Pamela Fairfield, Coun. Jim Green, arts administrator

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B.C. spring books

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tor Patrick Montgomery, and *Xtra!* West columnist Michael Harris. (It's probably appropriate to the populist and social-activist nature of Tetrault's art that none of the essays here is a highbrow critic or academic. Still, a rigorous copy edit would have been apt.) Tetrault has also produced a couple of the book's essays himself, and his clear and sincere words serve as a brief statement of his history, inspiration, and intent. He talks about some of his images and motifs, and describes the ways in which he is compelled to paint the "hard-edged beauty" of certain urban scenes, whether in Vancouver, Berlin, Havana, Mexico City, or Bangkok. Where his studio work is "a reflection of the street", he observes, "murals and public art are a form of direct intervention in the urban landscape."

The book discusses the impact on Tetrault's art not only of his long association with the DTES but also his travels in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It records, too, the profound influence on his work of the Mexican muralist movement of the 1920s to '40s, and touches on more recent trends in community cultural development and new-genre public art. Most significant to this examination of Tetrault's vari-



As the spiritual descendant of Mexico's muralists, Richard Tetrault creates large public works that lend a mythic dignity to what others see as poverty.

ous achievements—from his most ambitious public commissions to

his more modest woodcuts and linocuts—is the repeated observation that he renders what others might see as scenes of hopeless poverty, neglect, and degradation as images of almost mythic striving.

> ROBIN LAURENCE