

## Finding a monkey in all of us

Don't be surprised to see a little bit of yourself in Thomas Anfield's paintings of sock monkeys

BY ADRIAN CHAMBERLAIN, TIMESCOLONIST.COM DECEMBER 3, 2011



Vancouver artist Thomas Anfield, here with some of the subjects of his work, paints in a style inspired by Flemish-Belgium expressionist artist James Ensor.

**Photograph by:** Supplied photo, timescolonist.com

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What better to represent the human condition than the beloved sock monkey?

On Sunday, Polychrome Fine Arts on Fort Street opens its exhibition of sock monkey paintings. The show, Monkey Island, boasts more than 20 works by Vancouver artist Thomas Anfield.

This could be the most comprehensive sock-monkey painting exhibit to hit Victoria. Indeed, I'm going to go out on a limb and declare it that. I'll also recommend you see it, as Anfield's paintings are wonderful.

Of course, most North Americans know what sock monkeys are. They're stuffed folk-art dolls fashioned from work socks. In the U.S., the preferred sock was a red-heeled model — the De-Tec-Tip — originally manufactured by the Nelson Knitting Company (and still made by Iowa's Fox River Mills). The red heel became the sock monkey's crimson mouth.

In Canada, sock monkeys are made from a similar grey-and-white sock (the "lumberjack sock"), but with a red stripe on the end. Although home-made sock monkeys have been around for a while, they became really popular in the 1950s. Supposedly, the influx of cheap plastic toys in the 1960s slowed the sock monkey craze.

