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MONTREAL

EDITH DORA RAY
RECENT AND SELECTED WORKS

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May 15-29, 2008

It takes an astute *gallerist* to go out on a limb with a major exhibition of an artist who, until now, relied mainly on self-promotion. David Astrof Fine Arts did just that, presenting recent and selected works by Montreal artist Edith Dora Ray.

Born in Switzerland, and graduate of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (Honours Painting), and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Ray has been producing art for many years and had her works shown across Canada, as well as in New York and Lausanne. She is also an accomplished scriptwriter.

"Labouring diligently to make art that looks effortless, spontaneous and timeless", Ray has produced an impressive body of work that, seen for the first time in its entirety, places her among the most exciting contemporary Canadian artists.

What sets Ray apart is her unpretentious approach to her craft. She is never at a loss for subject matter, her immediate environment a constant source of inspiration. It is not so much the quotidian that she seeks; her art is more of an emotional response to what catches her eye at the moment, and almost without exception, it has to do with nature.

Whether it's a misty scene of trees lining the shore in Verdun or stylized red flowers in *Sumacs in the Park*, Ray's paintings reveal the hidden beauty of places we have become accustomed to looking at, but not seeing.

Ray's preferred medium – oil on carved luan (a type of plywood) – lends itself ideally to her form of expression, the grooves marking the textured material corresponding to the lines the trees trace against the sky, or those etched by their shadows on a snow-covered ground.

A highly intuitive and spontaneous artist, Ray produces works in varying format, from the expanse of *Lachine Canal Seven* (48 x 60") to a series of smaller (8 x 8") works arranged ingeniously on several large panels. In these miniature pieces, Ray reduces her gesture and palette even further; the images are but visual notations, more texture and pattern than form, fragments of an incomplete jigsaw puzzle that the viewer is invited to assemble in his mind's eye.

Canal Bird, Plaid Trees, Snow Sky... the titles are poetic clues, brief irreverent commentaries of an artist at ease with the insignificant, the fleeting, like the blur of a tiny bird alighting on a branch or the outline of a bare tree resembling an outstretched palm.

Among these textured, gestural works are several paintings that speak an entirely different visual vocabulary. Hinting at Old Dutch Masters, *One Grape*, a glossy 10 x 8" oil on canvas, is a miniature of profound proportions, a sensual morsel excised as if from a larger tableau.

Two oil on luan paintings exude a shimmering, translucent aura, seducing with their Zen-like austere yet delicate simplicity. *Lachine Canal I and Lachine Canal II* offer but a pale outline of a horizon, the water's edge hinted at by a sparse relief of shrubs. Suffused with light and air, they are nevertheless hauntingly earth-bound, their presence both ethereal and grounded.

The exhibition also includes several of Ray's figurative works, sketchy, painterly portraits of pets, family and friends.

Standing entirely on its own and defying its humorous title, *Das Boat is Full*, is a stylized, curiously static and highly plastic composition. The figures of a group of children piled into a rowboat are composed of vibrant colour patches, the barely marked features encapsulating individual characteristics of each child. Framed against an expanse of dark water, they are strangely vulnerable, suddenly lost in their carefree playacting. Unlike the other works in this large exhibition, this painting carries an additional emotional component, testifying to the maturity and versatility of Ray's talent. □

The Lachine Seven
Oil on carved luan
48 x 60"