

Eva Lapka: *Caprices*

"STUDIO 21" Gallery, www.studio21.ca, April 10 - May 6, 2009

Dorota Kozinska

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HALIFAX, NS

EVA LAPKA CAPRICES

Dorota Kozinska

"STUDIO 21" Gallery
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April 10 – May 6, 2009



Dream, (2008)
Ceramic, Chinese crackle glaze
15 cm x 23 cm

Eva Lapka is a Montreal ceramic artist and teacher, with a highly respected career in both fields. Her art is unique and original for her chosen medium, her three-dimensional works profoundly sculptural, a mix of figurative and abstract expression impossible to categorize.

At the beginning of her career she worked in tandem with her husband, the late painter Milan Lapka. Together they created works that combined their diverse talents, marrying painting and ceramic art with unusual results.

Since left to continue creating on her own, Eva Lapka has evolved into a most accomplished artist, whose works are shown across the country and abroad.

Her latest production is wooing the town of Halifax with a series of sculptural works and reliefs.

Six small pieces, *Caprices*, resemble gilded artefacts, wingless, headless Nikes.

Mounted to be hung on the wall, they form a curious pantheon of beings folded into a human form, rather than moulded. The body is barely there, perhaps in an unexpected gesture of a footless limb or a twist of muscular torso.

They are fragmented, composed of folded, caressed plates of ceramic material glazed into shimmering gold, the gaps

between their many parts revealing an empty interior.

They are accompanied by three larger pieces, textured, mask-like heads. Close to actual human size, they are as sculptural as they are painterly, fired numerous times in the kiln and adorned with metallic glaze.

Held in one's hands, a writer's fleeting privilege, they are curiously human, tactile, responding to touch despite their oh so fragile material.

Sunset and *Sunrise* are like two sides of the same coin, celestial twins, one darker, more sombre, his companion touched with the pink of dawn.

But in the third head, *Dream*, one encounters a very different entity. Beguiling smooth in some parts, strangely bulbous in others, he looks askance with slanting eyes, and it is not clear if the dream in the title is a pleasant one or of a more disturbing kind.

There's an unsettling beauty to this piece, and it kept calling me back and again.

Continuing on the theme of nature and reverie, Lapka has created several larger reliefs, *Summer* and *Winter*, with a female torso emerging as if from an embryonic form, and an accompanying series of square reliefs, *Twilight Season*.

With a touch of paint, albeit very restrained and delicate in hue, these are an interesting mixture reminiscent of the Lapkas early works, but with Eva's signature touch. Her female torsos, (they are invariably headless), are never formed from a mould, yet her hand seems to

hold the memory of their shape, as she repeats it with the minutest of differences.

This is at times an uneven show, not all the works speak the same visual vocabulary, and some feel too raw. Yet they are never without enormous creative potential and profound undertones.

This may be the moment to allow the artist to speak about her creative endeavour: "I try to avoid any narration, and restrict it as much as possible. In the practice of my craft, I feel as though I journey between light and darkness. (...) My pieces encompass elements of time, space, density, and memory, as well as openings to allow for breathing room. Sometimes, when a cry remains unheard, I wish to give silence wings; at other times, I leave things intact and this is simply enough."

Eva Lapka is represented in Montreal by Galerie Bernard (www.galeriebernard.ca). □

EXHIBITIONS

EVA LAPKA WILL ALSO SHOW:
WALLS & WHISPERS

Bilton Contemporary Art
Red Deer, Alta

September 19 to October 17, 2009

PARADISE
Canadian Guild of Craft
Montreal, QC

November 5 to December 4, 2009