

Ludmila Armata: Exit

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Veronica Redgrave

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LUDMILA ARMATA

Exit

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inspiration to move further into "the something abstract that emerges. I try to avoid narration".

Much of her work is about time. There is the actual time during the initial sketching. Then, at a later moment, Armata creates in her studio. For years she has worked with etching and dry point, welcoming the struggle that comes as she uses "old" steel for her etching. "I have to get what I want out of the steel." Etching is the process of using acid to cut into the unprotected parts of a metal surface to create a design in the metal. The steel sheets she uses are "old and rusty, so they too add an element of time: the memory of their own past."

Her art communicates an ambiguous tension. *Uvertura*, 2008, has a powerful feel; a centrifugal force tears up the page. Yet, the finesse of the outlying strokes adds a balance. There is a sense of "loose and trap": of tightness and release. In *Novenus*, 2008, densely packed dots create a doughnut shape, almost throbbing in intensity. But — it seems there is always a 'but' with Armata's work — as the outlying 'dots' spin away, their lightness of being adds a delicacy.

Recently, Armata has taken two new directions. Internationally renowned as a printmaker, she now works hands on. Actually,

feet on. For the beautiful *Exodus*, 2008, walking barefoot on thick matte paper, she left imprints in black ink. Time and a sense of ambiguity remain. Although one recognizes the form of a footprint, is it an underview or an overview? Are the feet arriving — or are they leaving? When did the person leave? "I love this idea of openness."

Exodus 2008 (3/10) is a strong, yet subtle work. It suggests the sense of the human body through the use of feet as the 'paintbrush', but also alludes to a migration; the footprints convey a sense of urgency. This work is a totally new shape: tall and narrow. There is a multitude of footprints covered with scratched lines. Feet stomp all around the edges, and their prints are smudged almost into oblivion with the same black ink. Once again, there is a balance. In her earlier etched works, the 'art' was usually in the middle of the page, surrounded by almost blank edges. However, this time, the centre holds a stillness: here there is no mark.

Her other new path is the use of paint, not ink. In the large (another new direction) piece *Verithora* 1, 2009 (175 x 107 cm), Armata has laid down strong, sensual brush strokes on heavy, translucent paper. The shapes are totally abstract, neither too powerful nor too delicate. They are simply beautiful.



Verithora 1, 2009,
oil on mylar, 175 x 107 cm
Courtesy: Galerie D'Este

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Ludmila Armata's work is about energy. And tension. And time. The themes she uses "haunt me." They are expressed through amorphous organic shapes that move, curl and grow. "I have created my own symbols," smiles Armata. When we meet, she is clothed in black and dark ink blue, a subtle shade that recalls Japanese designers. This is an appropriate geographical leap from a rainy

vernissage on the isle of Montreal, to the island of Japan, one of the countries where Armata has exhibited, along with Spain, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Sweden and Poland. In fact, Armata is a nomad: literally and metaphorically. She "loves to travel". It is on these journeys that she "finds inspiration".

Schooled at the Fine Arts Academy in Krakow, Poland, Armata has a classical training. Indeed, much of her work comes from drawing. "I carry a sketchbook everywhere I go." Her sketches "form a structure". How something looks at a moment in time gives her the