

Statement

By Arlette Francière

From childhood on, I have been passionate about poetry and art. My career as a translator fulfills my literary interest. I used to satisfy my love of art by being an avid museum- and gallery-goer. But art became more central to my life when I studied Art History at Concordia University. One of the courses dealt with the various painting techniques – from silverpoint drawing to oil painting, and students had to make a copy of a work of art in each medium. That hands-on experience was a turning point. I discovered a gift and realized that painting was something I needed to do.

I've always been attracted to landscape painting, especially to the work of the Expressionists. That is why, ironically, I rarely work *in situ*. Topography is not a main concern. Impelled by an inner compulsion, I have to feel what I paint. Often inspired by memories of sea, mountains, and skylines, and sometimes using dramatic photographs as points of departure, I let strong colours, bold shapes and rhythms guide me. In the process, my paintings become inner landscapes that express states of mind, or emotions, instead of reproducing an external landscape.

Not surprisingly, my preferred medium was watercolour because it allowed me the spontaneity essential to my work. But, in the past couple of years, I have painted almost exclusively in acrylics. This medium gives me the freedom I enjoyed from watercolour and lends itself to the more abstracted shapes I favoured when I painted in oil.

My predominant and most characteristic theme is the dynamics of land, sea, and sky, but my work also includes portraits, flowers, still-lives, and paintings dealing with social issues.

As a keen reader of poetry, I am delighted to find that some of my paintings have inspired poems, and I would like to share two with you. Henry Beissel touches the core of my work in an insightful poem about *Sky/Wave*. Uta Regoli was moved to write about *No Man's Lake* and captured its disturbing elements.

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Sky/Wave

(Reflections on a painting by Arlette Francière)

A blue tsunami unleashed, then arrested as it crests after sweeping the canvas clean of tormented rocks and clouds, masks of troubled spirits that ghost the landscapes this artist's pen and brush have magicked into the principalities of her art. Stillness has settled on a world in motion, a blue moment of meditation at the core of unending transformation.

An artist's sightlines encompass everything, the whole spectrum from the right of the heart to the left of darkness whence this blue wave rises. Reaches above the green horizon, beyond the turbulence of despair and desire. Attains a tranquillity of spaces inhabited only by themselves and by what might be.

Blueness is a cosmic gesture here. The hollow of a hand holding a promise of eternity it cannot keep. A dome to shelter the mind stretching to infinity where music blasts from the deep outside human range to resonate the heavens. An ocean rearing to lift us into its blue exuberance to become one with air, salt and water.

In this hyperbole of streaming blues, oil, colour and canvas become one too, a membrane permeable to the inner eye only. What happens here is a grand entrance to a warren where the flecked ground slides like green lava beneath the surface. We are drawn into deepening shades. Ultramarine the artist's dare to follow the light to the end of the tunnel.



Henry Beissel

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No Man's Lake

(for Arlette – Ottawa exhibition, August 2, 2007)

I

the hostilities were appeased by a treaty
the two fighting sides were separated
one to the east one to the west
after decades of mining
dumping spilling poisoning
the lake was put to rest

II

an eerie glare hovers over the region
melted metal – mercury or lead –
mixed with cyanide blue
in a halo of sulphuric vapors
had plopped heavily in belly-bottomed chunks
from the sky imprisoning winter
– a death-long sentence –
once in a while a yellow eye
pierces through the turbulent clouds

III

this is a view from outer space
where no man has set foot yet
nor claimed property
nor put it up for sale
nor raised a flag
this is a vision
an inside view
of regions
where we might come from
where we might head for

Uta Regoli



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