

Robert P. Roy

Breathing into Landscapes



Ice Fishing no 2/Pêche sur la glace no 2, oil, 24 x 48 in.

As he shows me his sketch book, Robert P. Roy describes an obsession he has with a certain type of light he has seen from a distance, the inaccessible star of a painting that's approaching perfection. He has held on to that star with an uncommon tenacity and has been following a long road in order to reach it.

His search started when he was a child and his interests veered towards drawing and painting. At first it was with crayons and then at the age of seven he

received an oil paint by numbers set as a gift. In his memory he particularly remembers the smell of the oils and that's when he fell in love with the idea of painting.

At the age of 17 he had to make a career choice, fine arts or science. Since he was good at mathematics and because his parents wanted to make sure he could earn a living, he studied engineering at the University of Sherbrooke. But even as he worked at becoming an engineer, Roy reserved one night a week to take a course in painting. With

his engineer's diploma in his pocket, neither work nor family life diminished his ardor for painting.

Moving to Montréal he took art courses at McGill and Concordia and attended workshops with painters such as Peter Krausz. At the beginning of the 2000's, he started taking lessons with Vicky Tansey at the Saidye Bronnman Centre and these radically changed his approach to art. She made him rethink all of the basic assumptions he had held.

When she asked her students to try



Autumn Wind/Vent d'automne, oil, 16 x 20 in.

copying a charcoal sketch blind he thought that perhaps he should leave, but once the surprise of her approach had passed he started to see the benefits of her methods. "If I really wanted to explore new horizons, Vicky was the right person to do it with. I returned to her class and I haven't regretted it. She helped me explore the ability of art to express itself, and how to use acrylics."

Eventually the time came for Roy to retire from his engineering career. This meant that he could now devote all his time to painting. After a series of shows, his work received some recognition and he started winning prizes.

In October, 2005 he held his first solo exhibition at the Avenue Gallery in Montréal. In 2006 he was named Artist of the Year by the Kirkland Artists' Association. In 2008 he won second prize at the Autumn Dreams festival in Baie-Saint-Paul. Every year he participates in numerous symposiums and exhibi-

tions. In 2010 he will be at the Toronto Art Expo from February 25th to 28th.

Roy sticks to a severe schedule. He rises early and usually works seven days a week. He spends most of his time in the studio he has built in his house. Sometimes he paints at night as well. "Painting provides me with pure pleasure," states Roy. "An evening in front of the television doesn't do it for me, I'd much rather be in my studio putting colour on canvas. I feel that I can never make up for time lost. I should also say that I couldn't do any of this without the support of my wife Danielle and my children Renaud and Fanny."

He usually starts with a photograph of a scene that he wishes to paint and then he makes a sketch of it. The sketch can be black and white but more often it is coloured. It represents his master plan. "The plan of an engineer," says the artist, laughing. In order to maintain spontaneity Roy will transfer the sketch

to the canvas with a certain freedom.

Every one of his paintings is an important work. He uses multiple layers of paint to build up relief. Each painting may take three or four weeks to finish. He believes in spontaneity and improvisation and compares painting to jazz. Sometimes this leads him to adding grace notes and sometimes this approach leads him to simplify his forms.

Firmly settled as a landscape painter with abstract tendencies, it is no coincidence that among the painters he admires are Tom Thomson, Suzor Côté and Leo Ayotte for their original treatment of landscapes, Mark Rothko for his abstraction and Richard Diebenkorn for his work in form and colour and his ability to mix figurative and abstract elements.

"I refuse to allow myself to fall into a routine. I want to be as creative as I can be. I want to leave space open for discovery, for new ideas and for the explo-

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Near the Pond/Près de l'étang, oil, 14 x 18 in.

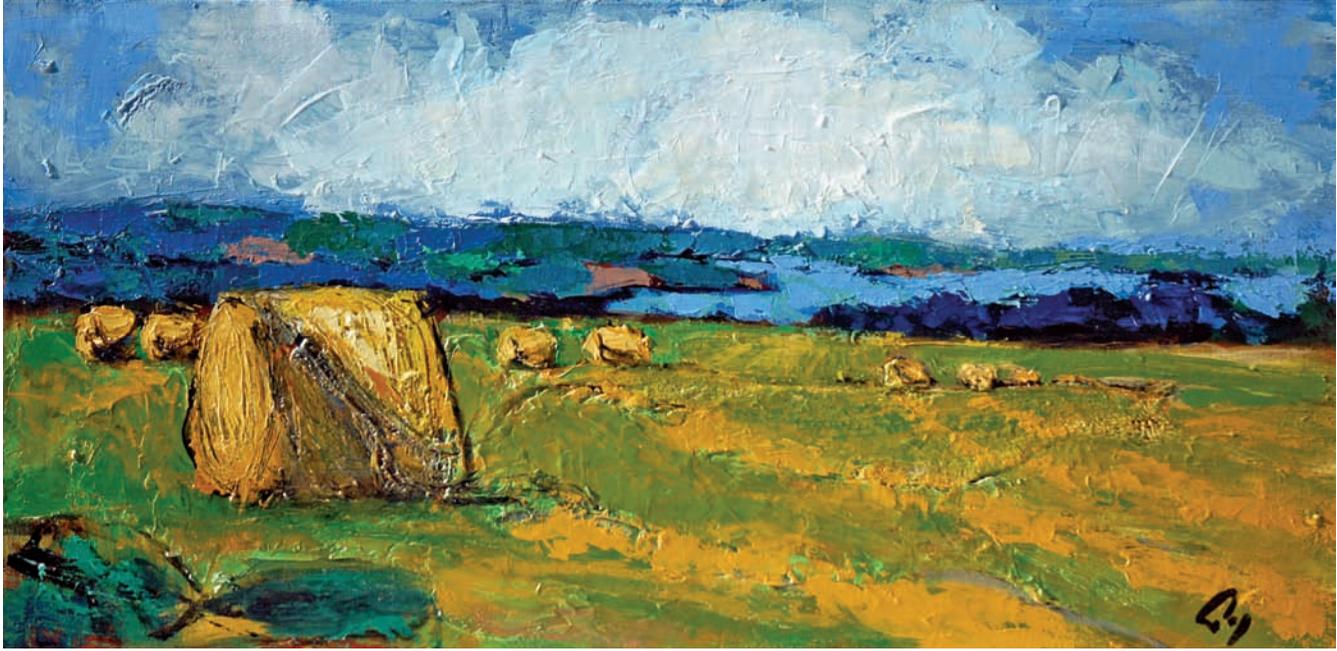


Mirror Lake no 2/Lac Miroir, no 2, oil, 16 x 20 in.

ration of new techniques. Just copying a scene doesn't interest me. What interests me is the way in which you can interpret something in a new and original fashion. Painting is translating emotion."

Roy doesn't have an agent. Here also, he wants a certain freedom. "Eventually I would like to have an agent but not at any cost." For the nonce he does it all himself. He buys his supplies and manages his inventory, keeping photographic record of all his paintings, and he negotiates with galleries that represent him.

He doesn't have a specific clientele in mind when he paints. "I don't paint according to what will please or not please. I want to preserve a total liberty of expression and I hope there will be a public that follows me, an audience



Ball Playing no 2/Jeux de balles no 2, oil, 20 x 40 in.

that I can respect enough to give my best to.”

Roy will probably always be searching for the light from that far off star, the light that can't be found. That is one of the things that make him good at what he does. “Once you have achieved your ultimate goal, what's left? You need a goal in order to make life exciting. The destination doesn't matter the journey does.” **I**

Michel Beauchamp

Robert P. Roy is a member of the Kirkland Artists' Association. His work can be found in the following galleries: Galerie d'art International, Québec City, Galerie Art et Style, Baie-Saint-Paul and Koyman Galleries, Ottawa.



Fall's Greyness/Gris d'automne, oil, 14 x 18 in.