

ALICIA POPOFF

Essence
and Flow



ART GALLERY OF REGINA

ALICIA POPOFF

Essence and Flow

I know that my personal sources – my roots, who I am, my personality, have a direct and significant influence on my art. My reflections, dreams, ideas, inner muses are all incorporated at some level along with my interaction with my external world... I experience the work process at a deeper inner level which perhaps is difficult to explain. I love to paint, I love to construct, to build paintings – as a total synthesis of everything that is me and everything that I know. It is a very involved experience and I get "lost" in myself and my art.

– Alicia Popoff, 1985

The most pervasive quality about the work of Alicia Popoff, and which continues to provide the frame of reference under which she creates, is the instinctive reality of the inner-world. For this highly personal and intuitive art, landscapes are of the mind and gardens are of the unknown.

To consider the art of Popoff is to contemplate a highly personal and subjective inner reality as opposed to that of the observable and more predictable reality of the external. Her works are never clearly defined overt statements; rather, they posit intangibles. At the core of Popoff's



"Old Time/New Time", acrylic, collage on canvas, 100 cm x 108 cm, 2006

painterly world really is a hyperactive imagination so freely enlisted as to pose challenges for the artist and viewer alike. When confronted by the myriad of images, forms, strange creatures and suggestive shapes found throughout her oeuvre, one is left to ponder the meanings of this rich personalized iconography and wonder how she dare to close her eyes lest she herself be overcome by the multitude. No simple waving wheatfield or calm northern lake for this most imaginative artist. If a reference to sky or water is chanced, it is a mysterious entity, at times seemingly empty and at others teeming with suggestions.

The unbounded sense of freedom inherent in such subject matter is reinforced in the selection of technique and materials. Ranging from the encaustic method Popoff mastered in the early 1980s to the reliefs and acrylic painting on canvas of today, she freely wipes, paints, forms and constructs, revealing that she is at once an abstract – expressionist, symbolist, colour – field practitioner and more. Additionally, the almost unlimited range of materials employed, from paint and paper to wax and wood, underscores the artist's search for a pathway to uninhibited expressions.

Despite the tendencies or best efforts of the art critic/historian, an appropriate label for this unique art remains elusive as it is completely lacking in allegiance to an identifiable local style, technique or attitude. Popoff has long been concerned with intimating universals, known and unknown, rather than with the reflection of specifics such as a seen landscape or a factual thing. Indeed, one of the great limitations to approaching the work of Popoff in terms of artistic traditions and modes, whether local or afar, be they learned, embraced, modified or rejected, is that these are ultimately external realities and thus remain peripheral.

Such freedom from convention and formula could, in the hands of many, be unmanageable. But Popoff is a particularly focussed individual. The forms may be indeterminate, the images enigmatic, but this need not preclude careful deliberation tempered by a precision of purpose and method in the act of art-making itself. The artist has learned her craft; she suggests, but she also controls. The artist may freely educe the imagery and paint in a highly conjectural way, but structure and authority is maintained.

If there is evidence of struggle in Popoff's work it is reflected in the tension generated when the considerable intellectual discipline applied to the process of painting itself, to the mastery of the basic elements of the painter's vocabulary – colour, form and line – at once seeks to contain the potential subjectivity of the imagery. It is this articulation of the forces of the conscious and the unconscious, of control and spontaneity and the inevitability of both balance and asymmetry which renders this latest series of work from 2006 so stimulating and which reveals a new and fuller artistic maturity.

The highly abstract nature of Alicia Popoff's most recent acrylic on canvas paintings could easily lead one to conclude that her quest is now largely a formal one and that she is a painter with all the



"Territorial Encounters", acrylic, collage on canvas, 105 cm x 169 cm, 2006

instincts of any non-objective painter. Reminiscent of an ambitious series of large painting on paper from the late 1990s, these recent works are characterized by a deliberately muted palette, a strong physicality of paint established by the palette knife and a startling reduction in recognizable elements in the subject matter. At times, Popoff boldly flirts with pure abstraction. A work such as "Sand Time" is composed of a matrix of rectangular forms each a miniature colourist effort in itself with no identifiable subject elements. Lacking the expected enigmatic birds, trees, figures and faces, in short, with the suppression of the iconographic, the work can even possibly be read as an exercise in the manipulation of colour and form for its own ends.

Other works in this exhibition however, present evidence that the subordination of subject-matter is not total. "Old Time, New Time" and "Space Whorls" also strongly demonstrate a preoccupation with formal concerns through the rendering of subtly modulated broad open forms and a strong graphic element, but these pieces still remain populated by suggestive images, however lightly. In "Territorial Encounters", with its rocket-like objects and vaguely planetary forms it is not difficult to conjure up a shifting ultra-terrestrial scape. This sense of ambiguity of space, created through the dissolving of colours, shifts in values and the illusion that certain forms are receding while others appear to push outward, is countered by the strong graphic element which establishes the picture plane.

There are two fundamental aspects to these wonderfully complex paintings, the visual and the psychological, and these, most fortunately, are not held in balance. To grasp the essence of Popoff's very being as an artist is to accept that she pursues her quest with intellectual deliberation and purpose while remaining constantly open to the forces of intuition buttressed by an unbounded imagination.

– Norman Zepp

EDUCATION

- 1984 Masters of Fine Arts, University of Saskatchewan
1979 Bachelor of Fine Arts, with distinction,
University of Saskatchewan

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 Art Placement, Saskatoon, *Time Within*
2005 Ken Segal Gallery, Winnipeg, *Spark*
2000 Upstairs Gallery, Winnipeg, *Lost in the Garden, Part 2*
1999 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatchewan tour, *Lost in the Garden*
1998 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, *Lost in the Garden*
1997 Upstairs Gallery, Winnipeg, *Voyages*
1995 Galerie Rochon, Toronto, *Spirit Garden Revisited*
1994 Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg, *Spirit Garden*
1994 Upstairs Gallery, Winnipeg, *Spirit Garden*
1994 Artworks, Saskatoon, *Travelling to Birdland*
1993 Galerie Rochon, Toronto, *New Urban Village, Part 2*
1992 Artworks, Saskatoon, *Monsters in My Teacup*
1991 AKA Gallery, Saskatoon, *Modern Myths: Lovers & Transitions*
1991 Thomas Gallery, Winnipeg, *We Were All Martians Once*
1990 Dufferin Gallery, Saskatoon, *In Fugal Time: Vultures on the Rock*
1989 Thomas Gallery Winnipeg, *Bird Creatures and Other Travelling Objects*
1987 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, *Passages: Theme with Variations*

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2005 Art Placement, Saskatoon, *New Directions*
2004 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, *Beneath the Surface, Artists by Artists*
2004 Art Placement, Saskatoon, *Group Show featuring Louise Cook and Alicia Popof*
2004 Parkridge Centre, Saskatoon, *Id*
2004 Art Placement, Saskatoon, *The Intuitive Way*
2002 Mendel Art Gallery, CARFAC Sask. *Mentoring group show*
2001 Parkridge Centre, Saskatoon, *Waiting For Rain (three person)*
1998 Artworks, Saskatoon, *Continuum (A. Popoff & L. Potter)*

SELECTED PUBLIC/CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Air Canada Collection | Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon |
| Canada Council Art Bank | Royal Bank, Toronto |
| City of Regina | Saskatchewan Arts Board |
| Dunlop Gallery, Regina | Sask Power |
| Great Western Life, Winnipeg | SaskTel |
| Kenderdine Gallery, Saskatoon | University Of Saskatchewan |
| Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina | University of Winnipeg |

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Alicia Popoff

Art Gallery of Regina

December 6, 2006 - January 26, 2007

ART
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93 cm x 97 cm, 2006

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