

ANGELA LORENZEN

CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF CANADIAN LANDSCAPES

By Beth Stewart

Angela Lorenzen is a storyteller, but she doesn't rely on words. She communicates what she sees and feels through paint and canvas.

Interestingly, this fine artist comes armed with a doctorate in biology from the University of Ottawa. After juggling dual careers for most of her working life, she made the final jump from science to art in 2009. And despite the loss of a regular pay cheque, the artist says she has no regrets.

The subject of her current narrative is the Canadian landscape.

For more than a decade, Lorenzen has travelled extensively and exclusively throughout Canada. This past year, the artist has undertaken the daunting task of painting Canada from coast to coast. Her goal: to capture the essence of a variety of Canadian landscapes.

Lorenzen's scientific training can still be seen in her keen observation of the natural world and how she develops her compositions by balancing intuition with logical thought.

Travel and photography are integral parts of Lorenzen's creative process; travel for what she calls the experience of "being there" and photography as a method of recording detail for future reference.

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Right Top: "West Coast Waves - Botanical Beach, Vancouver Island," acrylic on canvas, 24 by 48 inches, 2010.

Right Centre: "Dry - Eastend, Saskatchewan," acrylic on canvas, 16 by 40 inches, 2010.

Right Bottom: "Rainforest - Vancouver Island," acrylic on canvas, 42 by 48 inches, 2009.

Below: "Breaking Point - Jordan River, Vancouver Island," acrylic on canvas, 24 by 72 inches, 2010.



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Angela Lorenzen
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“I could not paint if I could not travel,” admits Lorenzen.

After seeing the sights, Lorenzen returns to her home studio where she painstakingly layers thin washes of acrylic paint to create a finish that has depth and luminosity.

It's a give-and-take process, says Lorenzen, in which she “darkens the darks and lightens the lights” all the while letting the previous layers show through. Her technique is particularly effective for capturing reflective surfaces and creating the illusion of natural light. It is this building up of optical textures that allows her waves to “shine and shimmer.”

“My most successful paintings capture attention at a distance, generate increased interest as they are approached, and finally instill both a sense of calm and a feeling of intrigue upon close inspection,” Lorenzen says. She relates this attention to detail to her earlier career as a biologist.

The resulting body of work is – much like its inspiration – breathtaking. “Ranging from rugged coasts and rainforests to rolling prairie vistas and snow-covered forests, each painting has its own mood and is a record of a particular experience,” the artist notes.

“Coast to Coast – Canadian Landscape Paintings,” the fruit of Lorenzen's labour, can be seen at The Art Exchange, 247 Wortley Rd., from Nov. 8 to 27.

The show includes 11 major acrylic-on-canvas pieces – ranging in size from 20 by 40 inches up to 24 by 72 inches – plus gouache-on-illustration-board miniatures based on these paintings. The three-by-four-inch minis are scaled-down portions of the major pieces, a bold attempt by Lorenzen to make owning her art accessible to all.

Al Stewart, proprietor of The Art Exchange, describes Lorenzen's body of work for “Coast to Coast” as almost photo-realistic, but with emotion. Not surprising, since the artist cites high-realism masters Alex Colville and the Pratts, Christopher and Mary, as influential to her approach.

This is not only Lorenzen's first solo show at The Art Exchange, but it is also the self-taught artist's first solo show period, and one for which she received an Ontario Arts Council Exhibition Assistance Grant.

It sounds as if the former biologist made the right decision when she jettisoned science for art. ■

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