

Artist to Collect Ron Eady



Constructure 4, 2006, encaustic on canvas, 72" x 48"



Ron Eady in his studio

Insightful
& layered
observations
of past and present

written by Debra Usher

Ron Eady's paintings are not for the passive viewer. By painting in a way that evokes a range of strong visual sensations, this Burlington-based artist leaves the viewer to find his or her own reference point. Interpretations of his work are always open to debate. "In my work, I like to explore the feeling of unsettled

or elusive imagery; whether it's a structure, industrial landscape or figurative work, I want to suggest information but leave the work open to interpretation, an atmosphere of uncertainty."

Ron has followed an artistic path from an early age, when his main focus was drawing. Craftsmanship seems to be in the family blood. Ron's father was a cabinetmaker for Mason & Risch Pianos and later taught woodworking at Lorne Park Secondary School in Mississauga. His grandfather designed stained glass windows for churches in Toronto. Ron attended T.L. Kennedy Secondary School in Mississauga, which had a fine arts program, and from there he went on to attend Sheridan College in Oakville with additional studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design. For many years his main focus was on developing drawings skills. Then he started painting with oils, and recently Ron has been painting with oils on copper.

Fourteen years ago, the family bought a cottage in the village of Rosseau, Muskoka. This now serves as a studio and seasonal retreat. "It



Double Cross (detail), 2009, encaustic on panel, 70" x 96"

was ideal. We wanted to be located in a village where I could build a studio and to be part of a small community."

The original part of the Eady cottage was built in the 1870s, around the same time as the general store beside it. When the artist, an avid antique hunter, had his studio built, he incorporated old church windows and architectural elements that he had collected. "It looks a bit like a little church tucked in amongst the trees. It's my sanctuary," Eady says.

Across the lake from the Eady cottage, Camp Oochigeas operated a summer camp for children

with cancer on the campus of Rosseau Lake College, a private coed school for students from grades 7 to 12. "When I saw the kids playing and having a great time, I wanted to see what I could do to help," Eady recalls. He produced a series of Muskoka-inspired limited edition prints from 1999 to 2005 with all proceeds from the sales donated to the camp.

Ron's wife, Gayle, and their three daughters have also followed artistic paths. Meaghan is an avid photographer and designs jewellery; Caitlin is a painter and mixed media artist; and Ashley is a fashion designer with the boutique



Overcast, 2009, encaustic on panel, 72" x 144"



The Core, 2008, encaustic on panel, 120" x 96"



Rosseau Studio

Teeny Weeny Bikini Co., located on the Rosseau property. Gayle makes Christmas ornaments and various other crafted items and works with Ashley at the boutique.

Ron Eady's paintings reflect the studio he is painting in. The paintings produced in his Hamilton studio are large and full of chilling colours and industrial imagery. The paintings he produces at the Rosseau studio often take their inspiration from the Muskoka surroundings; for example, an ongoing series of works entitled Weather Patterns reflects the stormy cloudscapes.

In the fall of 2009, Ron had two solo exhibitions. Abozzo Gallery in Oakville presented Recollections, works that were mainly inspired from his Muskoka surroundings. Many of the works showed figures set in a natural but unsettling environment.

The second show, at The Burlington Art Centre, featured works that were produced from



The Harbour, 2008-09, encaustic on panel, 72" x 144"

the artist's primary studio location in Hamilton, Ontario. "The exhibition at The Burlington Art Centre, Plant Life, represented my large-scale industrial landscapes inspired from the Hamilton-area steel mills. I find that this contrast between the time spent working at my Rosseau studio and my Hamilton location helps to feed my creativity," says Ron.

Ron's paintings of the Hamilton stacks and the industrial age serve as a haunting remembrance of things past that were not at all pretty. But Ron is not a photographer and his artwork, while based on recognized structures, moves far away from the documentary. Using a unique process he brings an inner and an outer vision into focus. His haunting portrayal of this industrial time and the damage it has left behind conveys both beauty and horror.

Although Ron has the ability to paint very distinct series of works inspired from his different surroundings, his technique and the power of his

imagery provide an underlying unity.

Initially, Ron worked with oils, adding wax for body and to build up the layers of colours. He liked the way the medium left a trail of brushstrokes showing the marks of the artist's hand. After taking a workshop in encaustic, a medium in which pigment is suspended in wax, his art changed. His primary focus over the last eight years has been encaustic.

Encaustic allows the artist to create translucent depth or, by adding more pigment and dry brushing, to achieve opaque and vivid colour. Through the layers of paint and wax, the viewer can gaze into history and follow the unfolding of events.

Ron mixes hot wax in pots with pigment and works off hot plates. "The work will evolve through the repeated process of painting, fusing and scraping and lead me into new directions until it feels complete." He becomes absorbed in the process of creating the work using this medium,



Guardian 2, 2009, encaustic on carved beam

describing it as "challenging and unpredictable" but "very rewarding." "The results are different each time and become almost sculptural."

He is constantly exploring the potential of the medium and taking it in new directions, whether in painting or sculpture.

The most difficult aspect of the process is its immediacy. The mix of hot wax with paint cools as soon as it is applied to the panel. As the layers are built up through painting and scraping, the works acquire a pronounced physicality. Many are large in scale and very heavy. The large industrial landscape pieces such as *The Core* (10' x 8') or *The Harbour* (6' x 12') were produced in multiple panels then fastened together.

"I guess that you could say that I'm addicted," says Ron. "Lately, I have been producing sculptures, such as *Guardian 2*, which is encaustic on carved 100-year-old beams."

When he is not painting, Eady can be found collecting bits and pieces of many different



End of the Line (detail), 2009, encaustic on panel, 48" x 48"

things for inspiration. He pokes around at antique markets for unusual objects to include in his art. He surrounds himself with inspiring props of every sort from antique costumes to unusual machines or objects. Sometimes just taking photographs of everyday people and surroundings in different lighting and at different angles will help him find a perspective or image to include in his paintings. In his figurative work, he will often use the props and himself as a model to capture a certain look or expression. "I'm always available on short notice," he says wryly. "They're not usually intended as self portraits."

Viewing original works by Anselm Kiefer has made an impact on Ron. Although they are not encaustic works, they are textural and sculptural in quality, and powerful and monumental in scale. He says he's impressed by artists who create engaging, thought-provoking work that will stop you in your tracks, artists who are "not afraid to explore their creative side and produce challenging work. I like to see the passion in the work."

When giving advice to artists who are just starting to explore their craft, he says, "Paint what connects with you, and don't be afraid to explore or experiment." And Ron takes his own advice, focusing on exploring his own thoughts and creativity and finding this to be the most gratifying and authentic approach. He will, however, take on commissions as long as they fit within his areas of interest and don't restrict his creativity.

About himself, Ron says, "My

main focus is painting and if I am not painting, I am usually poking around at antique markets. Sometimes, I get so absorbed with my work that my family just slides the food underneath the door. But when I have the chance, we like to get out for a relaxing steak with frites dinner, even better, a great home-cooked meal will get me out of the studio, for a little while anyway."

To see more of Ron Eady's work you can visit Abbozzo Gallery in Oakville, or go to www.abbozzogallery.com or www.roneady.com.



Imposing Elements 1, 2009, encaustic on panel, 72" x 48"