

Richard Savoie



Rue Saint-Louis, Québec, 24 x 40 in.

After twenty years at his craft, highly regarded pastellist Richard Savoie felt a need to realign his artistic direction, which prompted him to abandon the use of a medium that had garnered him enviable success. Born in Moncton in 1959 and raised in an artistic environment – works of his uncle Roméo Savoie hang in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada – he studied with Gabrielle Messier, assistant to Ozias Leduc, and Yolande Lefebvre, thus supplementing his innate talent with masterful technical skills that ensured his renown. Then one day he suddenly feels the urge to move on to something else. He abandons pastels and turns to oil painting, which means he has to learn a whole new technique, from the use of a brush to harmonizing colours and, most importantly, rendering light. Richard Savoie is fascinated with light, its sources, its transformations and its intensity which he incessantly endeavours to translate in his works, sublimate even in an effort to depict what our eye

cannot capture. To better achieve his purpose, the artist studied the physics of light and colour. Naturally attracted to the works of the Impressionists, he also values those of Tom Thompson, Suzor Côté, Marc-Aurèle Fortin and Clarence Gagnon. He further mentions Mark Rotko, Jason Pollock and Jean Paul Riopelle, for the luminous vibrations emanating from their paintings, light being the essential instrument of artistic composition whether the works are figurative or abstract, he reminds us.

Richard Savoie essentially paints natural landscapes and urban scenes. He has the uncanny ability to capture a precise moment in time and render its particular atmosphere, fugitive as it may be, either in wide perspectives or specific locations, for the benefit of the viewer. The suffocating heat pulsating in *Canicule à Trois-Pistoles*, while a layer of fog extends over the stillness of a sea of greenery, contrasts with the perceivable coolness of dusk in *Paysage à Verchères*, where



Cherrier Street Under Snow/Cherrier sous la neige, 24 x 30 in.

pinkish clouds stretch above a forest fronted by a flowery patch. *Sur un balcon dans les nuages* guides the eye beyond the dense fir and birch forest which seems to stretch indefinitely, while foggy strands stretch under a cloudy sky, filtering the sun – tidings of a new season approaching.

In another untitled painting, a half frozen river threads through the valley. Ginger grasses stand out against the dark green fir trees while a snow-capped peak lends its flanks to the timid rays of the sun. The end of fall is also approaching in *L'automne venu, elles repartiront*, where a few light touches evoke a flight of wild geese in a heavily cloud-laden sky. The yellowed leaves and denuded tree trunks are without a doubt foreboding of winter. Winter and snow, in fact, provide the artist with fantastic opportunities to play with light: golden and peaceful through the woods where branches ply under the weight of a thick white coat or colder in *Au coeur de l'hiver*, where a

trickle of water is slowly disappearing under the ice that imprisons it in a frosted landscape.

Winter in the city, as perceived by Richard Savoie, is nothing less than magical. Figures are scarce and most often walking away, their back to the spectator, to better feature the urban decor. Plays of light diffuse the hostility of the season. City lamps and light filtering from houses and buildings, warm the atmosphere and render it almost reassuring, fighting cold while snow muffles noise, in *Ballade sous la neige rue Cherrier, Rue Saint-Paul in Old-Montréal or Rue Saint-Louis in Québec City*.

Under the sombre sky of a Montréal street, a row of cars is aligned along snow banks. Far away, the silhouette of a passer-by, most likely hurrying home, can be detected. The lamp-lighted snow is depicted in white touches that contrast with the red bricked buildings and nocturnal sky. With efficient economy of means, the artist perfectly





Mountain Avenue, 36 x 48 in.

renders this winter evening. Richard Savoie takes as much pleasure in depicting the beautiful days of spring and summer with either a vivacious or a nuanced palette, whether underlining the generosity of nature by an abundance of flowers in a fenced-in garden in *Côté Jardin*, or the charm of a small bike shop in *Petit atelier de vélo rue Marianne*.

Days always seem too short for Richard Savoie. He leaves his studio mostly to ride his bike, an exercise he loves to the point of having travelled more than 11 000 km in the Laurentians since December 2012. Landscapes, panoramas... they fill his eyes and heighten his spirits. A selection of works will be shown on the occasion of a solo exhibition at the Balcon d'art gallery in Saint Lambert in November 2013. We are also eager to discover what will inspire the artist when he travels to Europe in 2014. Richard Savoie www.richardsavoieart.com

Catherine Guex