

ARTS AND CULTURE

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Peter Evanchuck and Helene Lacelle



By Maureen Korp

OOS residents who have enjoyed seeing the work of artists Peter Evanchuck and Helene Lacelle on display at Life of Pie, 1134 Bank Street, now have another opportunity to look at more of the artists' quiet, thoughtful compositions. "Looking Back, Looking Forward" is the current Evanchuck and Lacelle exhibition at Cafe Nostalgica on the University of Ottawa campus, running until June 20th.

The artists have chosen eight framed works for the exhibition, and have hung them on the walls of the cafe. The imagery is likely to prompt a bit of conversation among cafe patrons seated underneath the pictures: "What is that? Do you remember...? Isn't that the Chateau Laurier? Aren't they going to build...?"

One of the artists' compositions is, indeed, of the Fairmont-Chateau Laurier. It is a view, however, of only one side of the building, a view we are soon to lose. In the Evanchuck and Lacelle composition, a seagull flies off into a drift of clouds. The clouds are tinted in soft colours, colours seen only for a moment after sunset, and then only sometimes.

As we know, plans are underway to enlarge Ottawa's old, historic railway hotel with an eight-storey addition, a sharp-edged structure of glass.

In another of the artists' joint compositions, the viewer sees that elegiac sense writ large in blunt letters. The picture focuses on a large, old, broken log. It is well-weathered, and has been emblazoned with a one-word graffiti: "Broken." Lying on the ground beside the log is a black-haired baby doll. The doll's eyes are shut. Nearby, a crow keeps watch. Overhead, two long-billed, red birds fly. Whose doll is it? To whom does it belong? What is the name of the child who lost that doll? No one knows. Only now have we begun to count the numbers and learn the names of all the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls of Canada.

Five of the eight framed pictures in the exhibition are photo-based work,

compositions jointly credited to Peter Evanchuck and Helene Lacelle. The other three are mixed-media. These are credited solely to Lacelle. "Music to my ears" is one of the three. It is a painting of a large, orange mushroom cloud, seen on the horizon against a green sky. Nearby are flowers, blooming in the foreground. Flowers? Yes. Tulips, in fact. A black bird is there, too. Tucked into the drawing is a small photograph. It appears to be of a Japanese woman's face. What scene is this? Hiroshima? Nagasaki? Or, is it somewhere else? Somewhere yet to be? Where is the music? Whose ears are listening? Ringing?

Cafe Nostalgica, in the heart of the University of Ottawa's Sandy Hill campus, is an inviting, neighbourly place, one open to all in the downtown core, Monday-Friday, 11:00-23:00. The outdoor summer patio is now festooned with umbrellas, tables and chairs. Good food, craft beers and even sometimes live music are all on offer. But, the casual visitor should go inside. Take a look at what is there on the walls. You will want to have a further conversation with your thoughts after you have seen "Looking Back, Looking Forward." The artists provide good company.

"Looking Back, Looking Forward" by Peter Evanchuck and Helene Lacelle is a thoughtfully curated exhibition. Each of the eight framed-pictures has a tale to tell. The stories are in the details. All eight are of the same size, 22" h x 24" w. All are for sale, and modestly priced. Ask the cafe servers for contact information.

Cafe Nostalgica is on the University of Ottawa Campus at 601 Cumberland Street.

For more info on the artists go to: movieshandmade.com, goopmailart.blogspot.ca, marvelousrealismcanada.blogspot.ca.

Maureen Korp, independent critic, curator, and historian, has lived long in Ottawa.



Above Left; Artist Lacelle peeking around the photo 'Heron on Rideau near Bridge' by Lacelle & Evanchuck.

Above Right; Creative artists/photographers Helene Lacelle and Peter Evanchuck at their Cafe Nostalgica show 'NOSTALGIA - looking forward/looking backward'.

PHOTOS BY PETER EVANCHUCK

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