



Painter brings cities to life at Rothwell Gallery



by **Laura Cummings**

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Article online since May 8th 2009, 9:09

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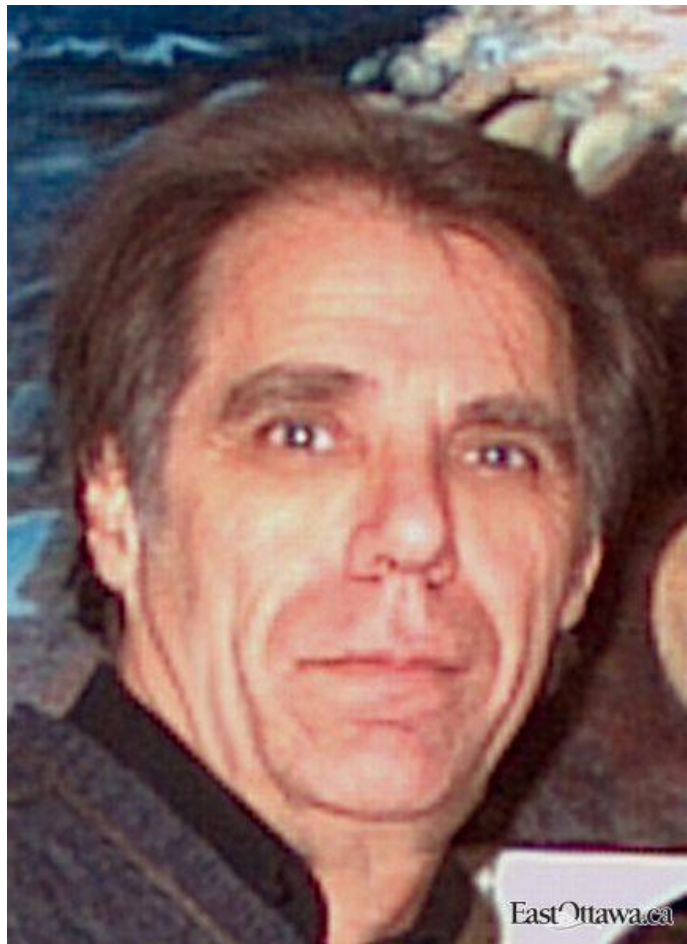
If anyone can be described as a jack-of-all-trades, it's Gloucester's Ross Rheume.

Even with a featured artist exhibit going up at the Rothwell Gallery this week, the east-end oil painter has also made his professional mark through globe-trotting project management as well as music and design, as one-half the musical duo Roman Grey, and by creating Alanis Morissette's Buddhist-inspired condo detailed in television show *Cribs*.

Though Rheume admits his "first love is painting" – it's also his current sole focus – he suggests his other professional experiences have translated well. With art, Rheume compares pulling together and coordinating his ongoing Rothwell Gallery exhibit to "an album release." Creating Morissette's condo, meanwhile, meant "designing and building the place like you do an album; it was the one language we had in common."

Overall, "it really does show creative things are all linked up," Rheume continues, pointing to motif, harmony, importance of design and concept as ideas that stretch across each. "I feel all art forms are in some way similar. I find they're complimentary in a sense. There are learned lessons in all of them."

This month's exhibit, which runs until May 31, features approximately a dozen works by Rheume, explains gallery manager Nicki Sleeth, adding Rothwell partnered with him after putting out a call for submissions several months ago.



Ross Rheume. Photo supplied

"I thought (his work) was fantastic," she recounts, referring to the large oil paintings covering a range of geographic and historical settings. "They have high contrasts in them; it makes them very lively."

Rheaume's style, which works well with the gallery's usual subject matter of landscapes, also offers a new twist with his cityscapes, which Sleeth applauds for their interest and motion.

"It's sort of an impressionist style, but with a lot of realism," she says, also pointing to Rheaume's historical recreations of cities like Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal as another interesting facet of his exhibit. "I've never really seen artwork like his before. There's a lot of life in (the pieces). They're very warm, and they draw you in; he's not just showing you a picture of something."

The exhibit, Rheaume explains, is "a collection of work from the last couple years, mostly new stuff."

Returning to Ottawa five years ago after extensive travelling to locations including the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East as a project manager for hotels and museums, Rheaume recounts he had a "large collection of images" to work from.

Those images – as well as some turn-of-the-century photos from the National Archives – make up the inspiration for work featured at the Rothwell Gallery, he continues.

"There's something about the look of images from that time period, it touches a chord in me somewhere," Rheaume says of his historical recreations in particular. "It resonates with me for some reason. I'm trying to bring the story of Canada ... into the light through painting it."

Though his style is contemporary by virtue of being modern, its European, impressionistic edge "really fits the era," he adds.

His travel-inspired paintings, meanwhile, come from spending significant time in countries like Cuba and Thailand.

"I love the colour and vibrancy," Rheaume explains. "I like movement and people's relation to their environment. There's really a lot of colour and mood, whether it's winter in Canada or summer in Cuba."

For more information, please visit www.rossrheaume.com or www.rothwellgallery.com