

# Artist marks milestones of November drive home

Leiba Rustin drives the same route home to Hampstead every day. For anyone else, that might become routine, but for an artist who gleans inspiration from what is familiar to her, it is the ignition point for a whole new series of works.

*Driving Home*, on show Oct. 31 to Nov. 24 with the vernissage on Nov. 1, circulates viewers through Montreal streets from the starting point of the artist's studio at the Canal Complex on St. Ambroise Street. Galerie 3C hosts the exhibition of a dozen works from the series at 9150 Meilleur St., suite 202, behind Marché Central.

"For some reason, four years ago my husband picked me up and drove me home from my studio. I photographed all these things with the point and shoot camera I kept on me," she says, indicating her resulting pastels on unstretched

canvas and paper that capture the growing luminosity of street lamps as the sun sinks below the horizon.

The initial images were taken around the same time of year as this exhibition, when late afternoon is pulling the sun down over trees bared for winter. Pastel is the ideal medium to translate the soft, dusky light and almost-erie glow of traffic signals as they funnel cars through the city.

Vehicles shed their daytime shells to reveal painted contours candied by reflections. Buildings come alive as their exteriors give way to what's inside.

"There's something bittersweet about the end of another day. It's the hour when there's longing and a little sadness. You regroup and think about the evening ahead. It's like endings and beginnings," says the artist.



**Heather Solomon**

Rustin's route is along St. Ambroise, up St. Rémi to the treed escarpment of the Falaise St. Jacques, onto Décarie under the train trestle, along de Maisonneuve Boulevard and eventually up Girouard Avenue and west along Côte St. Luc Road.

It's a vehicular path familiar to most Montrealers and there is nostalgia in its recognition, particularly since a section of it has since been blocked off by the construction of the MUHC superhospital.

The flashing lights of police cars and fire trucks on Girouard prompt a detour and take *Driving Home* into the realm of philosophy, in that the route of life is fraught with roadblocks and mishaps.

In some of the works, the black-top rushes under the car while a skyscape of purpling clouds takes on the aspect of landmasses. "There's something about the balance between the manmade and nature that I really love," says the artist who sees it as a connection between the human presence and that of God.

"The sky is holy, *hashamayim*, and the trees at the sides of the roads are the transition, rooted in the ground yet aspiring to the sky with the lacy tips of their branches. The time of day is like nature asserting itself in the human landscape."

To add texture and what she calls a "veil of allure," Rustin rolls diluted ink over the oily pastel medium. The ink beads up and dries, adding another sense of gloaming to these sensitively felt city portraits.

The large Astral building turns pink in the afterglow of sunset and Rustin has drawn a blurred figure in one of its top-floor windows, her daughter Rebecca who lived there before moving to Toron-



**Leiba Rustin brings out the beauty of Montreal streets at dusk in *Driving Home* at Galerie 3C, Oct. 31 to Nov. 24. [Heather Solomon photo]**

to. Even a city bus takes on a mood. "They get a gorgeous green glow inside like an aquarium," says the artist.

Rustin's previous series also held time still. One was a tribute to her late mother told in images of her apartment contents. Another was of her childhood country house filled with the furniture and her parents' possessions.

"My art is a way of grabbing hold of time," says Rustin who imbues emotion in every one of her works, turning the shadow and colour of her new series into something more than literal representation.

She looks beyond the notion of a streetlamp, an overpass or a stretch of road and sees them as things of beauty. "I used to be a country girl but since I've taken my studio in St. Henri, it's become an important part of my life and I appreciate more and more the urban landscape," she says.

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