

PRESS RELEASE

May 26, 2008

Most of Muskoka residents had perhaps the only chance to see Shex's paintings as reproductions at *Gamay Noir* and *Pinot Gris* bottles on VQA shelves in LCBO (He was the winner of the *Hillebrand Wine Label Competition* in 2005).

When two of his original oils first appeared here recently at *Déjà Vu* (Chancery Art Gallery annual International exhibition selected by from the prominent *Toronto Art Expo*), Muskoka fine art admirers and collectors were sincerely impressed. They craved to see and acquire more of this distinctive artist. Thus, it will be more:

From June 11 to 29, paintings of **Dragan Sekaric Shex** (Yugoslavia) will be shown at his solo exhibition **"Broken Promise"** at Chancery Art Gallery in downtown Bracebridge. Opening reception with the artist will be on Saturday, June 14, from 5 to 7 PM.

"Magical Realism" in the *sfumato* style

The term "Magical Realism" was originally used by art critic Franz Roh to define the new neo-realistic attitude in attempt to seize the mystery that breathes behind or within our everyday world. In literature, it is foremost associated with Latin American writers, like Marquez and Cortazar. Not without a good reason, Canadian journalist Ralph Benmergui once applied the term "Magical Realism" to describe the paintings by Dragan Seckaric Shex...

Some critics believe that *"... Sekaric's most original contribution to fine art is his modern use of the 'sfumato' style. Equally important is the emotional power in his work, which stands out in today's art dominated by design... 'Sfumato' in his paintings is the dominant style and an important part of the message. This style endows his paintings with a mystical, enigmatic character, and it portrays human figures as part of a larger world that denies them the defined worlds they once enjoyed and that gave them identity and importance"* (Prof. Keith Ellis).

Yet, beside the exclusive technical aspect, one could detect an intriguing philosophical aspect pointing to the universal existential conflict, which the artist happened to endure on a deep level in his own life experience and transformation. He confessed:

"... I started to paint when I witnessed the beginning of the Bosnian war... This war was not an ordinary war, but a civil war... To see people change to the point where they long to destroy another human being that just yesterday was their friend is the worst form of witnessing... I had to paint... In moments of afflictions, it abates the pain and is a means of spiritual and material survival..."

Thus, originally trained with University degree from the *School of Architecture* in Sarajevo, Dragan slowly drifted from Architecture to Painting. He got away to Rome for advanced studies in fine art. After his Italian period of learning and art experimentation, he moved to Montreal. Currently Dragan works from his studio in Toronto.

Dragan Sekaric Shex has exhibited across the Mediterranean countries of Europe, in Cuba, US, and fine galleries of Montreal and Toronto; his canvases are presented in private collections around the world. He has received numerous professional awards and won the First Prize in several prestigious art contests.

For this exhibition **"Broken Promise,"** Chancery Art Gallery has selected the paintings that seem to reflect the everlasting conflict between the expectation and reality.

*"The only possible teacher
except torture is fine art"*
Bernard Shaw
The Doctor's Dilemma

Chancery Art Gallery is a commercial gallery which accepts original works of contemporary fine art on consignment and acts as the artist's non-exclusive agent for exhibition and sales.

The gallery is affiliated with a psychology office on premises – www.PrivateCounseling.ca. Occasionally, for "artist-in-crisis" a psychological consultation is offered *pro-bono*.

*"...The one thing which may
in some degree reconcile the
cultured person with life –
scientific and artistic enjoyment..."*
Eduard von Hartmann
Philosophy of the Unconscious

From the Freudian view, arts derive from the same source as fantasies and dreams, and have the same purpose – to reduce tension in the soul. This applies to both creation and perception of the art, regardless of modality – painting, sculpture, literature, music, dance, etc. Thus, in some respects artists are not special – like the rest of us, they have the same narcissistic desires and fantasies, rather shameful to share under our cultural restraints. But unlike us, artists have a very special gift – they are able to exhibit their fantasies in a skilful, camouflaged way, and to attract us first with the external, formal side of their work. It traps us, provoking a preliminary, properly aesthetic pleasure, turning our internal "censor" off guard. And then, it enables us to enjoy our own deep prohibited fantasies – projected on the art – without shame and self-blame, with revealing catharsis. How are artists able to do this? It's their mystic secret; it's art.

The gallery's mission:
*"Piece of pie to the artists,
Peace of mind to the rest of us"*

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