

Carol Kapuscinsky – Where Land Meets Water and Sky

Carol Kapuscinsky's paintings take us on a journey. It is a journey through the landscapes of Ontario, along the St. Lawrence, through Quebec and ending at Canada's east coast. She takes us through marshlands, fields and shores. In all the works, Kapuscinsky gives a scene that includes land, water and sky and it is where all three meet that we are transfixed. It is a journey of rich colours, dramatic lighting and personal passion. On further consideration, however, viewers will find that these paintings take them to a place much different than the east coast. They invite us into the landscapes but then we each travel to our individual destination, one of emotion, tranquility and even spirituality.

Kapuscinsky has always been attracted to the environment around her and her environment has always been the subject of her paintings. These works reflect many of her experiences with the landscapes she encountered during her many travels in Ontario and east to Newfoundland. While on these journeys Kapuscinsky was drawn again and again to different scenes and had to pull the car over, jump out and take pictures to be sure to remember each site. On many occasions she would also take videos of the location, to record not only the visuals but also the sounds and movements of the place.

It was only on returning and reconsidering each of these landscapes that had spoken so profoundly to her, that she saw the commonalities. Overwhelmingly, the scenes showed big, open fields, but also bodies of water and the sky. What is striking is how these different elements of the land come together under Kapuscinsky's hand and how she presents them to us. It is when looking at Kapuscinsky's painting process that one can truly understand not only how the artist works but also why her paintings affect viewers in such a powerful and emotional way.

When planning her paintings, she uses both the photographs and the videos she took on the road as reference tools to help decide which places she will paint and what the composition will be in order to capture the unique character of each site. After considering the images, she simplifies the composition, edits out extra information, maintaining instead clear forms, luscious colours and big open spaces.

In *Spring Thaw, Lakeridge Rd @ Lake Ontario*, for instance, we can see how she has used and changed the photograph to compose the painting. Although the general placement of objects, many of the details in the ground and water and the overall feeling of the painting remain loyal to the photograph, Kapuscinsky has chosen to eliminate all the small branches of the tree including most notably the branch overhanging the water to the right side of the photograph. This decision plays an integral role in the mood and focus of the painting. By simplifying the form of the tree and removing the many twigs and branches, she eliminates the diversions forcing viewers to focus on the bare elements of the tree, the ground, the water and the sky. The distant shore is no longer blocked and perhaps most notably, the scene is quieter and more austere. The tree seems to stand stronger, its presence certain but alone. *View from a Bridge in May on Queensville Sideroad* shows similar editing. The extra twigs and growth in the photograph create a messier, more distracting image, whereas the painting is calm. In removing these details Kapuscinsky chooses to concentrate on the colour, the lighting and the openness of the space. Without details in the foreground to stumble over, the viewer can instead move unobstructed through the field into the background and indeed to the horizon where the land meets water and sky.

In other cases Kapuscinsky will deliberately keep the tiny details as in *September Marsh on road to Caribou Light in Nova Scotia*. Here we see that although some of the marsh is once again simplified, she chooses to include some of the flowers in the foreground. The inclusion of these small but important details ensures a real sense of place. This is not just any marsh but this specific one where the flowers grew at her feet. It grounds not only the painting but also the viewer. We know where we are standing and it is here that we look out onto the scene that leads us over the land, across the deep water to the far shoreline and ultimately to the never-ending sky.

Just like the artist is transformed while she paints, lost once again in the location she is capturing, "I'm back in the moment with the wind blowing through my hair, and the exquisite beauty and sounds of nature running through my mind,"ⁱ so too are we as viewers transported to this site. Even without knowing where the location is, Kapuscinsky gives us the information we need to know: the smells, the temperature of the air, the sounds we might hear. But it is not even the specific location that is ultimately important and so appealing about Kapuscinsky's paintings. It is how they make us feel and what they make us consider.

Whether it is a painting like *Green Field Along the St. Lawrence, on Hwy. 138 near Neuville* in which the field expands endlessly in front of us before dropping into the water and sky or *Snow Clouds Brewing Over Cape Race, Newfoundland* where we can meander along the shoreline within the mist of the water as if we are drifting not only along land but through the air, we become part of the landscape. It is difficult to determine which element is the most dominant or the most important. At different times even within the same painting we become part of the earth, we long for the water or we lose ourselves in the sky.

Seeing all these paintings in one venue allows the viewer to travel with Kapuscinsky through all these provinces and their wonderful landscapes. But it is her simple, yet strong forms, her rich and inspiring colours, the composition that draws us in and lets us wander and her thoughtful lighting that brings us to a whole new place. It is a place where we contemplate nature, beauty and life. We can lose ourselves in each canvas and in the body of works as a whole and emerge with a life-affirming sense of our world and ourselves.

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