

Selections from the
Artist's Books

Ondine

and

Trolls

by

Martin Berkovitz

Introduction to Ondine's Journey

One night in April of 1998, just before going to bed the idea for a painting, "Ondine's Journey" came to me, as out of the blue. I was charmed by it and immediately felt that this was but one of a series, a progression of pictures. Who was Ondine? What was her mysterious journey? Where was she going? Who would she meet?

Within a couple of days all of the pictures had come to me. But while I had my series, Ondine was as enigmatic as when first she appeared to me. I am glad of that. Ondines are mysterious and deserve all their mystery. We humans should respect that.

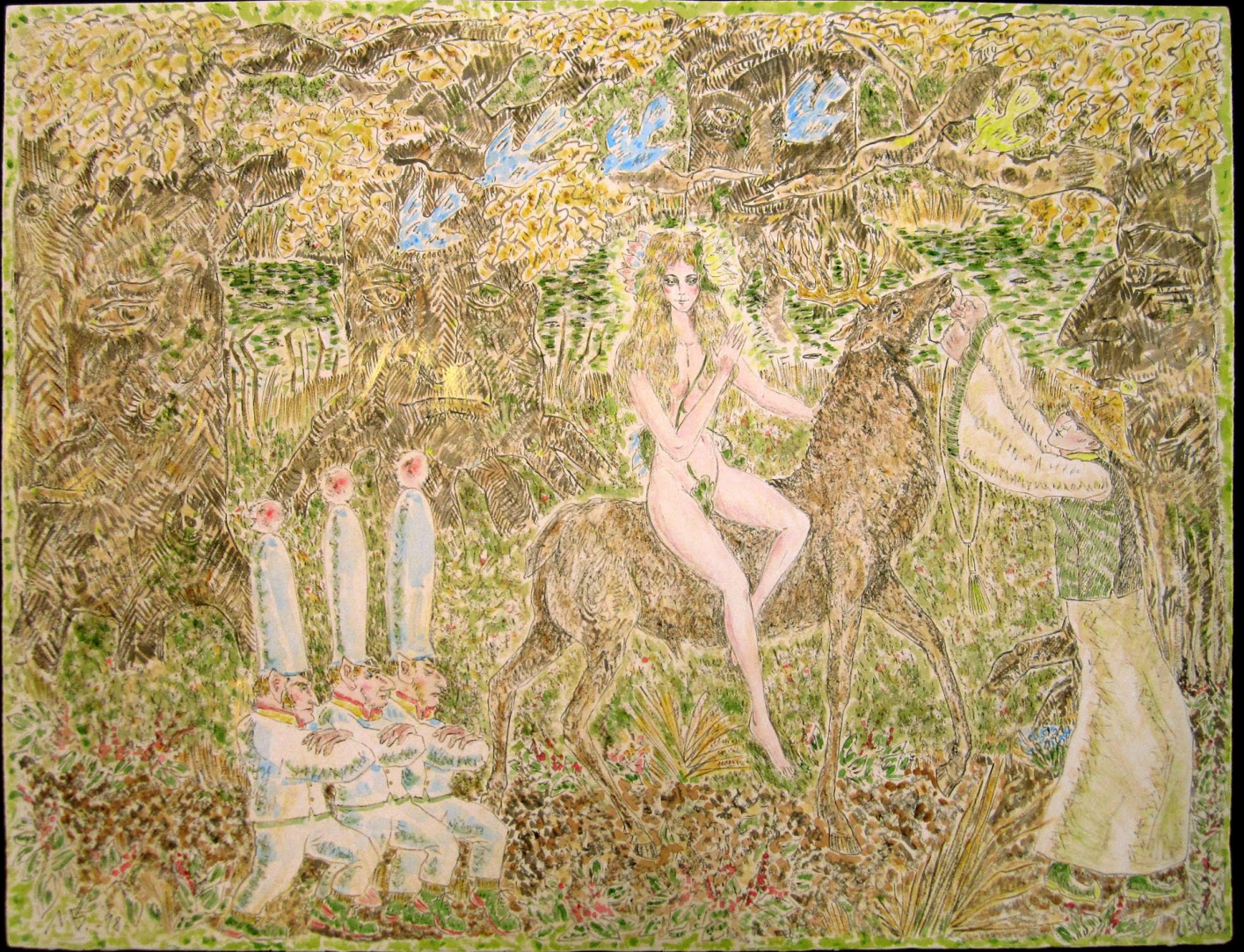
As she traveled I began to understand something of the people she visited, particularly, of course, the Tomaschevic family. Drawing my characters made their personalities and histories very clear to me. The Tomaschevic parents, Gleb and Oksana had settled in Toronto early in this century from their native Ukraine. Gleb worked for the Massey Harris farm machinery company as an ironworker. He retired in 1951 and died seven years later. His ever-loving wife, Oksana was the center of their home, a warmth that was terribly missed when she passed away shortly after her husband. Gleb and Oksana had three children. The eldest was Vera. She worked most of her adult life as a switchboard operator for Bell Canada. The next child was Dimitri who everyone called Doug. He held a job at the post office as a mail sorter and was remembered as a man with a voracious appetite for books, particularly books dealing with his socialistic outlook.

But the Tomaschevic at the center of this story is Andrei, the youngest son. Andrei became a reporter for the now defunct Toronto Telegram writing under the name, Andrew Thomas in the forties and fifties. He would write a series of poems called "Ondine," after he ceased working for the newspaper. In those days he could often be seen sitting in all night donut shops during cold Toronto evenings scribbling down his strange poems. As he aged Andrei became reclusive, and more and more lost to a world of dreams only he remembered and cherished. It was these melancholic memories he poured into his poetry.

Andrei never married. He claimed that in his twenties he had seen a measure of feminine beauty that had spoiled him for the earthly variety. He had confided to a local poet that in the first years of the last war he had seen an exquisite being he called Ondine, a residing spirit of some unknown lake or river. He had put down these impressions in his series of poems. He feared that unless he expressed his experience in artistic form people would think him mad.

I can of course only speculate what those lost poems were like, but I feel sure I would have loved them. At the close of my series I imagined that I received a letter with no return address. In it was a newspaper clipping of the passing of Andrew Thomas, who had died in a Toronto nursing home. An interesting coincidence. These drawings I dedicate to Andrei and the Tomaschevic family, all gone now, memories and yellowing photographs, and of course, Ondine.

Martin Berkovitz
May 1998
Santa Fe



Ondine's Journey

ink, brush and watercolor 30 x 22 inches



Evening Tea

ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



Andrei Tomaschevic's Blissful Dream
ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



The Mysterious Well
ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



Ondine's Farewell

ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



Bleak Evening Poetry

ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches

Ondine

Like Andrei Tomaschevic who inspired my series, Ondine's Journey, I too became smitten with Ondine. She showed herself to me and allowed this artist to become imbued with her sweet, serene and unforgettable beauty.

I painted her in "Ondine and the Painter," and in loving memory I fashioned the whole series of paintings. Knowing of her immanent and final departure from the enchanted forest, I left the original watercolor portrait pinned to an ancient oak tree, her last presence at the beloved lake, until the rainwater washes her away.

Martin Berkovitz
Sept. 25/98
Santa Fe



Ondine and the Painter

ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



Ondine and the Mother of the Woods
ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches

Ondine's Farewell
and the Story of Li Po

In the first part of our vanishing century a young Chinese laborer named Li Po left his native Shanghai to work for the Canadian Pacific Railway. One day, deep in the northern wilderness he wandered far from the siding to find himself hopelessly lost in a strange forest. He tripped and fell headlong into a lake. Unable to swim he was on the point of drowning when he was rescued by what at first seemed an apparition. A beautiful young woman, Ondine, took him back to the shore and revived him. Li Po was overcome by immediate love for this strange and other worldly being and at once decided to dedicate his life to serving Ondine as friend and helper.

Just as in the past when Li Po accompanied Ondine on her journey to Toronto, so now after many years at their lake he would accompany her on her final pilgrimage to the Golden land, where after two hundred years she must return and melt back into the primary energy out of which she emerged.

Although for him it is a heartbreaking journey, he knows for her it is the final joy. Glancing back at him and the forest with an exquisite smile she disappears forever into the Golden place. Bidding farewell to the being he has loved more than anyone else he returns to the lake, but his heart is heavy with painful longing for what he knew. He will build a beautiful pagoda and dream.

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The Rescue
ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches



Ondine and the Golden Palace
ink, brush and watercolor, 30 x 22 inches

THE TROLL SERIES BY MARTIN BERKOVITZ

Trolls are magical beings belonging to the Fairy Kingdom. However, unlike those more ethereal beings, trolls are part of the physical world just as we are. They are secretive inhabitants of the great forests of northern Europe, particularly Scandinavia, but they exist as far east as Karelia in northern Russia.

Trolls are generally well disposed to humans, but as human population has spread, they have had to seek more and more remote and secluded locals. Trolls are part of the spirit of great forests, mountains, rivers and streams living in caves and mountain crags. They generally avoid human habitation having different ways and perceptions. In my series of drawings, trolls are shown in different attitudes and approaches to the human world.

Although appearing lumbering and even awkward, trolls in fact possess tremendous powers of athletic ability and endurance that make humans seem frail. In my work they travel the human world with their circus of marvels and temporarily attempt to integrate themselves into our world, but then have a habit of disappearing as if into nothing. Trolls live for centuries and are powerful magicians. The forest will always be their home, and although we glimpse them now and then, their true origin and ways will always be shrouded in mystery.



Troll Drummer
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Nighttime
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Winter Journey
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Prince Argoutinsky-Dolgoroukov Proposes a Toast
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Cirque des Trolls
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



America
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



New York Fit
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Trolls in America
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches



Playing Directly From the Heart He Elicited the Deepest of Responses
brush and ink, 22 x 30 inches

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