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## Art show celebrates little known Canadian master

Emma Jackson

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Ottawa residents don't have to travel to Europe to experience the masters this weekend, as an Ottawa South church puts on the one of the only exhibits of French-Canadian artist Rene Cera's work.

Cera was born in France in 1895 and spent his youth running errands for artistic master Pierre-Auguste Renoir and sketching with Henri Matisse while training at the Nice School of Art. He moved to Toronto in 1928 to work as an architect, and stayed in Canada for more than 30 years, rubbing shoulders with Marshall McLuhan and other cultural icons of the time.

Throughout his life Cera never stopped painting his unique and futuristic visions, and about 80 canvasses have survived the years in his granddaughter's Greely basement since his death in 1992.

On May 28 about 30 of Cera's later works, mostly from the 1970s onwards, will come to light at the Our Lady of the Visitation Church in Ottawa South near Bank Street and Rideau Road, where his paintings can be viewed and purchased between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. in the banquet hall.

Marie Trojan organized the show as a fundraiser for the church's new hall, after hearing about the paintings from his granddaughter, who attends the church. Trojan said when she first saw Cera's paintings she was amazed by the beauty of them, and knew that his work had to be displayed and promoted as a piece of Canadian history.

"I was absolutely blown away at the body of work that this man did," she said. "He never had a name. So until you build the name and you get the work out there, there's just not going to be a demand for it."

His paintings evoke the spirit of the masters, Trojan said, with some impressionist pieces harkening back to Monet and other more abstract visions taking on the essence of Picasso.

Cera's paintings hang across Canada, including his most famous "Pied Pipers All" which hangs in the McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology, and others in St. Michaels College in Toronto and several embassies.

To add some variety, Trojan invited several local artists to take part in the art show on the last weekend in May, including long-time parishioner Jacquie Livingstone who specializes in nature paintings.



**Rene Cera uncovered.** Art show organizer Marie Trojan will showcase about 30 of French-Canadian artist Rene Cera, who lived in Canada for more than 30 years after spending his youth sketching with Parisian masters and fetching supplies for Renoir. *Emma Jackson*

Her subjects include some of the common animals you might see in Ottawa and Ontario, from pileated woodpeckers to families of otters. On the flip side, she often paints more exotic creatures such as leopards, penguins, ostriches and hippos. She's also done several local landscapes, most notably of Nicholls Island locks in Manotick.

Livingstone, 64, discovered her love of art in 1988 when she decided to pursue classes in tole painting, the folk art of decorating and painting tin and wooden household objects.

"I arranged to have some sessions and I've been painting everything I could find since then," she laughed. Livingstone has showcased her work at the Metcalfe Farmer's Market in the past, and regularly donates her artwork to the church's annual auction. This year, Livingstone also got her sister Sylvia Pinard, an Osgoode resident and artist, involved in the show – she will be selling a number of underwater scenes painted in acrylic as well.

For information about the art show and the works for sale, visit [www.artshowrenecera.com](http://www.artshowrenecera.com).

*Ottawa This Week - South*

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