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Landscapes, flowers — of sorts

By Cate McQuaid Globe Correspondent December 08, 2015

Lundsager and painter Wendy Edwards make a stirring pair in their two-person show at Drive-By Projects. Lundsager's abstracted, oil-on-canvas landscapes have a nightmarish quality. "Never Been Seen" sets quavering yellow petals on a salmon-pink ground that drips upward, seeping into an acrid beige sky, where a single pocket of blue has been violently squiggled over with black.

In many of these paintings offending colors, such as a sickly yellow tinged with green, and angrily knotted forms where the sun should be imply disaster has occurred and the dust has not yet settled. Lundsager cites the heated and foreboding landscapes of Marsden Hartley and Charles Burchfield as inspiration, but her paintings are less specifically scenic; she employs abstract expressionist techniques to evoke, rather than depict, places laden with pain.

Edwards's vibrant, edgy paintings are direct responses to van Gogh's depictions of irises and roses. More than 120 years on, she pushes further into abstraction than he dared. Her fleshy blossoms float, free-form, against grounds painted with generous swirls that energize space.

In "You Too," the rose petals wag open, painted in loose, loaded strokes of rosy red, orange, and white over a green-on-blue ground. They are at once motion and pendant, sensual flesh.

Big, looping green strokes make space twist backward behind the iris blooms in "Like Lower." The languid petals, like those of van Gogh's irises, snake, crumple, and coil, and the urgently blue and periwinkle petals pop right off the surface as Edwards roughs up her paint handling. These are not irises; they are, perhaps, the distilled, vital essence of the flower.

INSPIRED: Wendy Edwards, Eva Lundsager

At Drive-By Projects, 81 Spring St., Watertown, through Dec. 19. 617-835-8255,
www.drive-byprojects.com