Mischenko, Olia. *Ravine World*. St. Catharines, ON: Rodman Hall Centre / Brock U, 2014. 30 p.

Curator: Stuart Reid

Graphic Design: Rob Gray, DesignWorks Studio

Editor: Kathy Daymond

This work is “published in conjunction with the exhibition *Olia Mischenko: Ravine World*, January 25 to September 8, 2013” at Rodman Hall Art Centre.

Artist’s book content: 8 folded reproductions of drawings by Olia Mischenko about ravines / “A Realm of Freedom” (Kenneth Hayes)

Olia Mischenko was born in Kiev, Ukraine. She studied architecture and art history at the University of Toronto. She currently lives in Toronto.

Stuart Reid says of this artist’s book that it is an “instant museum,” as the eight reproductions of Olia Mischenko’s ravine world can be placed one next to the other and form a frieze. Putting the pieces together is also a playful activity which resonates with the play activities of the children depicted in the ravines. The children’s presence dissolves the sense of danger that one may develop in this rough environment. In fact, Mischenko’s elegant and finely drawn posters might inspire a child to color them and fill the blank spaces with new shapes in a creative gesture of appropriation.

Mischenko’s world documents and reinvents the ravines found in various cities, for instance Toronto and St. Catharines, across southern Ontario. Most intriguing in the artist’s work is her use of space. The density of her lines, their stylised details, and their adroit accumulation provide an impression of fullness despite the many blanks devouring parts of the drawings. The resulting abstractedness is paradoxically intensely realistic, maybe because this ravine world prompts the viewer to express very real feelings such as wanting to take part in an adventure, having fun, remembering one’s childhood, being attracted by the mysteries of a wild sunken place, getting back to nature, maybe fearing vaguely such uncharted territory. Mischenko’s careful practice radically transforms our understanding of the urban environment: the city vanishes and is taken over by the wilderness.

Four quotations from the book

“Rodman Hall [...] is situated on the edge of a ravine, and the installation, which comprised three large drawings of a ravine, rendered in great detail in black ink on paper, occupied the central and flanking apertures in the disused bay window of the hall’s former drawing room.” (Kenneth Hayes)

“[...] the artist is critical of the aloof, colonial, and imperial gaze implicit at Rodman Hall.” (Kenneth Hayes)

“The artist’s view is not identified with that of the house above the ravine, nor, however, is it exactly the view from below [...]. The viewer’s standpoint is vaguely suspended over the river [...].” (Kenneth Hayes)

Folded reproductions in the artist's book:

"Parts of the drawing can be rearranged in a number of alternative sequences of different lengths, for example 1-6-3-7-8, or 1-2-3-7-5-6-4-8, or 1-6-7-5-2-4-8." (Olia Mischenko)

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