PAINTERLOGUE #22
OCTOBER 2020
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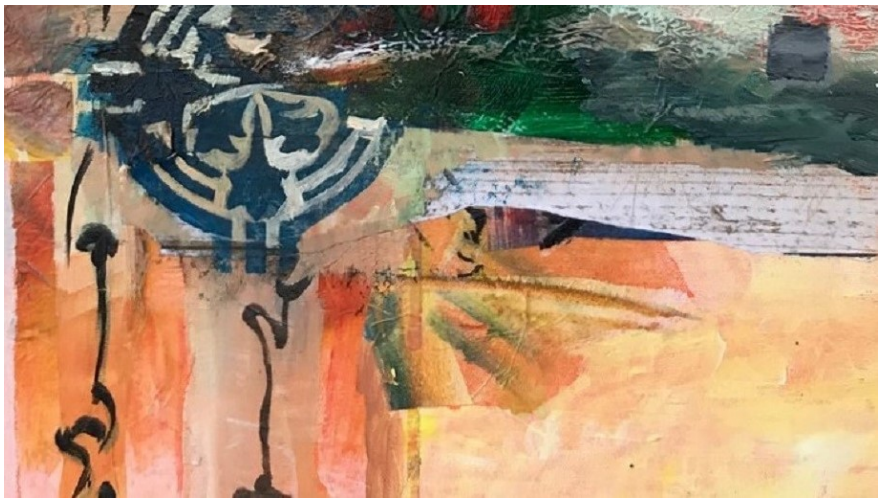


Connect Within and Beyond

SPOTLIGHT ON COLOUR

WINSOR ORANGE

Winsor Orange is a single pigment orange, created to be a bold and vibrant orange for artists. Whilst orange can be made easily by mixing red and yellow, variations can occur if proportions differ, so you can turn to Winsor Orange when you need consistency.

Orange has a fascinating multi-cultural history, although we didn't give this colour the name 'orange' until the 16th century; before that it was known as 'yellow-red' or, in the English language, it was called 'saffron'. Orange wasn't used as a name for this colour until orange trees arrived in Europe from Asia and then the name for the fruit was used for this colour across different languages, including Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and, of course, English.

Despite the relatively modern name, orange dates back centuries to the ancient Egyptians, who used the colour in their tomb paintings. They made the colour from realgar, which was a toxic mineral that contained arsenic. To give it some context: the Chinese used realgar to repel snakes! The Romans were also a fan of orange but they derived their orange colour from another source: orpiment. This substance yields a golden yellow-orange and was used in medieval times to illuminate manuscripts; this makes perfect sense because the colour signified a quest for knowledge.

The symbolism of orange as a special colour is reflected in many cultures. For example, Buddhist monks used saffron to dye their distinctively coloured holy robes as the colour was deemed to represent perfection and balance. Confucianism sees the colour as representative of transformation, and in countries such as India and China it is seen as a perfectly balanced colour between beauty (yellow) and fire (red). It also has associations to fertility and abundance, so artists often painted the goddess Pomona in orange draped robes.

Impressionists were particularly fond of orange, with Cezanne creating orange from yellow, red and ochre against a blue background, blue being the complimentary colour to orange. Van Gogh was so enamoured with the colour and the relationship it has with blue that he used them together extensively and wrote about it in letters to his brother Theo, saying 'there is no orange without blue.'

I have been working on a watercolour of a woodland path along which I walk most mornings. I found it a challenging subject. Here are two pieces, the second being one with which I am happier; maybe it's the people!

CRISIS

Overpopulation, Infrastructure Decay, and Pollution

I gave my wife a 1000 piece jig-saw puzzle of a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. He was a Dutch/Netherlandish painter from Brabant. He is one of the most notable representatives of the Early Netherlandish painting school. His work, generally oil on oak wood, mainly contains fantastic illustrations of religious concepts and narratives.

My 16” X 20” acrylic mixed media painting, above, is somewhat reminiscent of The Garden of Earthly Delights, which absolutely chaotic My piece is in response to a competition called “Crisis Now”, referring to the environment, submitted on September 13, 2020 to the Federation of Canadian Artists and accepted for showing along with “City Park in Crisis”, also an acrylic mixed media painting. You can see both through the front window of the gallery: a prefect setting.

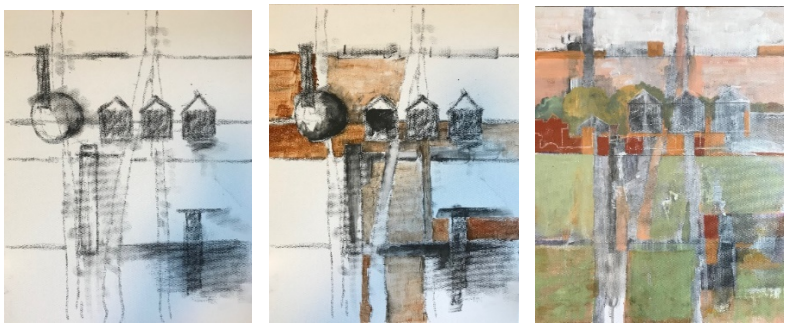
All donations from visitors to the exhibition at the Federation of Canadian Artists, Granville Island, between October 5 to 18, 2020, will be presented to the David Suzuki Foundation

This watercolour is entitled “A Walk in the Forest, BC”. It is 12” X 16” on Arches Rough 140lbs Cold Pressed Watercolour Paper. Heavy paper can absorb more water and rarely needs stretching. Paper weight is determined by two different methods: (1) measuring a ream of 500 sheets (22” x 30”) in pounds (lbs) or (2) by measuring a single sheet in grams per square meter (gsm or g/m2). There are many forest paths close to where I live that offer exciting opportunities for watercolours.

The above small 8” X 6” sketches are exercises in watercolour en plein air for future larger watercolour paintings.

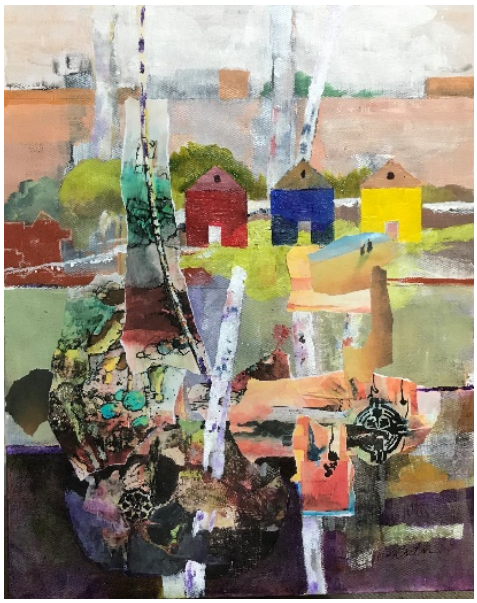
I almost always create small value sketches forllowed by watercolour sketches to determine composition and values of colours. The black and white study above indicates how important it is to determine background, middle ground and foreground.

This 20” X 16” acrylic mixed media painting is entitled “Primaries Landscape”



The one on the far left is a rendition of shapes in charcoal. I had to cover this medium with gel to prevent it smudging when painted over. The middle work is a process in determining composition. I added colour to accentuate layers of landscape and background.

The cartoon on the left shows more landscape features, but the foreground needed work. The right hand work is almost completed, with the addition of foreground information about rocks, shrubbery and parts of trees, to create depth and anchoring of the painting. The collage pieces are torn parts of some of my previous paintings which I printed for use in the collage. This is the finished 20” X 16” acrylic mixed media painting; “Primaries Landscape”.



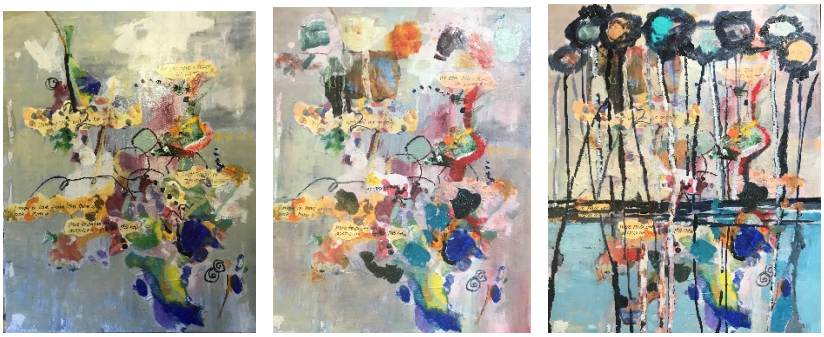
The finished painting; “Landscape Primaries”

I was looking through some of my sketchbooks for inspiration, and found this little watercolour of a silo and barns in Saskatchewan. I found the photograph I took of this composition. So, I decided to paint a larger version, 16” X 12”, on good quality watercolour paper, above. One thing of which I am certain, is that painting from a photograph does not allow a real understanding of the dimension and volume of scenes. I remember this scene well. The small watercolour helped more in understanding depth, contour, colour and volumetrics.

It was suggested to me that I should paint more architectural scenes. I took a workshop with Thomas Schaller in San Miguel de Allende four years ago. He was an architect, before transitioning to artist, and as such was able to capture scenes of buildings and bridges with watercolour ease. I have four watercolour paintings I completed in his workshop, which I intend to paint for rediscovery of the almost ten years my wife and I lived in San Miguel for many months each year.

Cy-anJanna. 20” X 16” acrylic mixed media on canvas frame.

More of this acrylic in November! The challenge presented was to look at a painting by Cy Twombly or one by Janna Watson. I chose to use both. Her work is very abstract but organic, whereas Twombly tends to be all over the place using strong colours and interesting wild compositions. They are often dark and sinister. The above concept shows some Watson, and the Twombly concept overlaps; see the tree shapes developing below.



This 12” X 16” watercolour on Arches Watercolour paper 140lbs rough is from a scene near Tofino in the forest across the road from the Wickaninnish Inn. There is a winding boardwalk through the forest and amazing scenes of trees, ponds and shrubbery. The path is named appropriately Rainforest Trail

This photograph of the trail was taken in summer.

Well, it is now well and truly autumn! We’ve had warm days, rainy days, foggy days, but the most wonderful colour transitions in the leaves of trees. The colours in the Botanical Gardens and street trees, forest trees – I like trees!

There are many scenes like this on the coasts of British Columbia.

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