

Spectral

Solo Exhibition Nov 9 – Dec 31 2019

Remarks for Opening

Herringer Kiss Gallery Calgary AB

A year ago I took a leap of faith and moved from my home studio in Nanaimo to a more spacious studio in Chemainus, which is a half hour drive away. I now have the use of an entire classroom with long sightlines, light and space! This change shook me up and inevitably shaped a new trajectory. I could now expand and make larger paintings. So I set out to create a body of work with more saturation and flow.

Returning to a method we developed 15 years ago, my husband and I built a second wood contraption (the 2.0) and a massive hard-back stretcher so I could paint my largest painting to date – 9x16 feet! I always stretch my canvas over top of custom made cradled panels so that the canvas doesn't sag and I have something to scrape against and walk on.

If I pour paint formations on large-scale paintings and then try to walk backwards with my scraper in hand I have to keep looking behind me so I don't step in the paint and this interrupts the flow. So it was a technical limitation that prompted the making of the original contraption.

Now I want to describe it in more detail to clarify whatever kind of fantastical apparatus you're imagining. It's a rather basic wooden platform on wheels that spans 9 feet on either side of the hard-back stretcher. Below are two lengths of wood that act as a track so that it can glide smoothly over the expanse of the canvas. I lay facing down on what looks like a weight lifting bench. It is also on wheels so I can use my toes to push myself from side to side on the platform. I start by pouring mixtures of paint in individual passes and then wield my 8-foot wide custom scraper, pulling the paint along as it swirls and coagulates under the pressure of my tool.

There is a lot of the preparation on the front end, with putting down grounds that are chalky and absorbent, then pre-mixing the colours with gloss medium, and doing dry runs so that my assistant gets the hang of pushing the contraption and responding to my cues. The experience is exciting because there are so many unpredictable possibilities in the process of pouring, the gesture of the hand, the chemistry of the paint and all of the factors that create material variations.

From my perspective, the paintings are an embodiment of movement and the parameters of the process it took to make them. Beyond this and most importantly, is the internal work of feeling connected. In the spring I started to rehabilitate my creativity. After 30 years of being an artist I had some bruises and scars so I undertook to heal these because I knew they were in the way. I did many exercises that seemed silly and indulgent but ultimately I needed to find fun and exuberance – to paint freely, I had to feel free. I made sure to sleep enough, I exercised, ate healthily, enjoyed my family time, tried to have a balanced life – to create a grounded space from which my imagination could take hold. I started to spend more time walking in the forest to generate ideas and let go of frustrations, resentments etc ...any negativity that ends up in the work if I don't face it. I kept being attentive to my state of mind and tried to gently listen to anything that came up. I also embarked on learning about tarot and would set the context of each studio session with a one-card reading. This allowed me to make sense of feelings and access my spirituality.

To me these paintings have in them the feeling of the coast, of swimming at the nearby lagoon, of driving along the pastoral oceanside road towards my studio and working in a former catholic elementary school, once a place of community and spirit that is now inhabited by artists practicing their own religion. They are born out of a solitary communion with nature and self. They are an artists' prayer, asking questions and finding answers in paint – an encounter with the unknown – *SPECTRAL*.

Thanks to Deborah Herringer for being open to my outlandish visions and taking on exhibiting this massive painting, also for being a partner in developing, promoting and selling my work, to my studio mates at along with other friends and colleagues who tried their hand at pushing me on the contraption, to the peers in my orbit for our valuable artistic exchanges, to my assistant Natasha Habedus who just happened to be coming to Calgary, for helping me with the final push of putting on hardware, sanding, wrapping paintings etc, to Aaron Sidorenko for his assistance to put this stretcher together and his sense of humour that made the work fun, to Kevin Kenishiro for showing up at just the right time and offering to help get this painting on the wall. And last but not least, thanks to my ingenious, hard working and devoted husband Denis Robichaud who's insistent support both technically and emotionally allows me to live my dreams!