

AN
EPHRASTIC
POEM

Liz Earl
Michael Griffin
John Waite
Lois Huey-Heckle

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An exhibition at the Lake Country Art Gallery
February 15th to March 29th, 2020

An Ekphrastic Poem

Ekphrastic poetry explores art. Using a rhetorical device known as 'ekphrasis', the poet engages with a painting, drawing, sculpture, or other forms of visual art. Poetry about music and dance might also be considered a type of ekphrastic writing.

The term 'ekphrastic' originates from a Greek expression for description. The earliest ekphrastic poems were vivid accounts of real or imagined scenes. Through effusive use of details, writers in ancient Greece aspired to transform the visual into the verbal. Later poets moved beyond description to reflect on deeper meanings. Today, the word 'ekphrastic' can refer to any literary response to a non-literary work.

Examples of ekphrastic poetry include Anne Sexton's *The Starry Night*, John Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and Anne Carson's *Nighthawks*.

~ from: Jackie Craven, *What is Ekphrastic Poetry*, ThoughtCo., November 5, 2018

This exhibition, *An Ekphrastic Poem*, asks you, the viewer, to be the poet. Give ekphrasis a try...

- *pick an artwork from this exhibition
- *start a conversation with art work, ask questions, invent a response
- *reflect on details in the work
- *tell a story

The poem can take on any form, haiku, limerick, sonnet, narrative, you decide.

Enjoy.

Curatorial Statement

For twelve years, I spent my days working in an art supply store. Over the years, I met many who found their way into the store, some looking for advice for a one time project, others who were starting, taking classes, and those who made their art practice a full-time career.

But many dedicated artists do have another life. One that includes a day job that helps pay mortgages, groceries, day to day living expenses. I met the four artists in this exhibition during my years at the art store.

Liz Earl was a regular customer. During her visits, we would discuss colour theory, composition, watercolours, and her recent art piece. Liz first went to university to complete a nursing degree. After a couple of years she decided to return to university to complete a second degree in accounting. Liz moved to the Kelowna area in 1988. She started with photography but soon switched to drawing. Over the years, Liz has worked in many mediums, including watercolours, acrylics, pastels, and oils. Liz says, 'I can't imagine life without some kind of art.'

John Waite would enter the art store as either John Waite the artist or John Waite the high school art teacher. Although I have never discussed it with him, I imagine balancing the two to be a challenge at times. John is a graduate of the University of British Columbia with a double major in education and fine arts. John has taught art in the lower mainland and Vernon. He retired from teaching in 2000. You can find John on his farm on the Commonage or painting in his studio.

Michael Griffin seems to be everywhere. One minute buying art supplies, next at an artist talk and again participating in a board meeting of a local arts organization. Michael has attended the Vancouver School of Art, University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University studying fine arts, architecture, design, art history, and English. Michael taught English for many years at Okanagan University College. He is also a founding member of the Okanagan Artists Alternative.

January 31

*Mid morning across the lake
the mountain sits against the blue sky
on a sunny cold day
as if it has leaned back
deeper into its armchair
of white and Prussian blue
touches of mauve and grey*

~ Michael Griffin

Lois Huey-Heck is an exception to the above artists. I spent two years of art school with Lois back in the late 1980s, after which we went separate ways, pursuing different educational goals. It would be later, back in the art store that we would meet again. Lois' art practice is diverse and a visit to her home/studio is a wonderful experience of colour, texture, light and contemplation.

Well known Okanagan artist Jude Clarke and the very accomplished writer/poet John Lent are our guest contributors for the *An Ekphrastic Poem* catalogue.

Jude Clarke paints with mixed media: watercolour, conte, and soft pastel. She has been exhibiting her work for over 35 years. John Lent is a poet and singer/songwriter who has published 11 books and who taught creative writing for over 40 years.

Clarke and Lent are currently collaborating on an example of ekphrastic painting and poetry in action, a 12 painting/12 prose poem project about living in Prague. 'No Trip into the Ordinary' is one of the works in this project.

As I walk through this exhibition and think about words, images and subject, I stop at a few of my favourites, Michael Griffin's *Batch Plant Kelowna 1990*, Lois Huey-Heck's *Microcosm Macrocosm 7*, John Waite's *Orchard II* and Liz Earl's *Apples*, speak to me the loudest. Finding words to describe what is in front of me comes easily, although I am not a poet, I enjoy the process.

An Ekphrastic Poem is about dedication, practice, and time. The Lake Country Art Gallery is pleased to bring together Liz Earl, Michael Griffin, Lois Huey-Heck, and John Waite for this exhibition and celebrate their art practice.

~ Wanda Lock
Curator, Lake Country Art Gallery

Liz Earl

'The world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings'
~ Robert Louis Stevenson

The love of travel and the outdoors are subjects that feature predominately in Liz Earl's watercolour paintings. The landscape of Palmer Lake, Washington and the quaint rural heritage home located in Bedford Mills, Ontario add a nice contrast to the bustling street life in Mexico. Earl flows between landscape and figurative subjects easily working from photographs she has taken on her many travels over the years.

Liz's watercolour of a beautiful heritage home is called, BedFord Mills, Ontario. The house was originally a flour mill 130 years ago. On the side of the house, out of the viewer's vision, is a waterwheel that was used to grind the flour. The rocks that clad the house are from the Canadian Shield.

Landscape is a favourite subject. Palmer Lake, Washington is located 45 minutes from Orville, Washington. Liz and her family have spent many weekends camping in their trailer at this spot. Liz recounts a memory, *'one night we saw a horse coming back home in his horse trailer. When the horse entered his compound all the other horses greeted him warmly - it reminded me of a happy family gathering'*.

Wishes and Dreams, a watercolour painting set in Digby, Nova Scotia shows an older gentleman sitting on a park bench looking with great anticipation at the cars and people passing by. The painting is a snapshot of a moment in time and possesses feeling of nostalgia.

'I love water-colour because you never really know until the very end the outcome and most often you throw it out, but sometimes there is a keeper.'
~ Liz Earl









Michael Griffin

Winter Solstice

'Old age is a flight of small cheeping birds...' William Carlos Williams

I don't know:

sometimes a sledge hammer

pounding its way down pounding

each day each hour each minute.

The body gets up is showered fed dressed

and the mind drives it on: Do this.

Or like cotton candy

a sugary sponge of fluff

Today sweet a touch of caramel

too sweet for words which anyway I forget

Maybe I'll read it out of me

find the sour stuff.

Go on a cage in the empty air

rattling in the wind.

In my mind I'm still a little boy,

or some damned and damaged teenager

aching with lust; or mindful in my rehearsal

of this and that, all past.

You remind me of love

a heart's desire agonies and peace:

a painting of a tree a lake dry hills

Yours you said like home.

You can see the small yellow flowers
that cover the hill near where you live.

There is a sweetness in that thought
an unraveling of pain.

Not mine though. Go.

Pick up the hammer the seat candy.

Boots on gloves hat.

Enter the wind the dark morning.





Batch Plant Kelowna 1990, oil on canvas





Portrait 1 and Ballet Studio 1 thru 4, watercolour and conte

John Waite

Rather than a traditional resume, some concepts I have held close:

- * Every painting is a failure until I forget my original vision
- * I dread looking at yesterday's painting in the morning
- * I can't escape the landscape - I couldn't live in the city
- * 'The loose is beautiful' - Barb Waite
- * Awe! To paint like a child
- * Words (concepts) with power: tension, dissonance, ambience, action
- * At an early age I felt an affinity for asymmetry in composition -from Oriental art
- * Later I recognized this as 'Tension' within the frame work of the painting and have recognized and used subject, colour and colour dissonance to create tension
- * I love the duality of paint and imagery, ambience-more tension
- * I realize that at this stage I am Age Related Attention Deficit
 - * It's best if it develops quickly
 - * I'm old enough to realize time is limited
 - * The unfinished painting is 'alive' - ambiguous, filled with potential
 - * The finished, polished painting often feels a little like taxidermy
- * As much as I love painting, I create a lot of obstacles to actually doing it
- * Successful paintings, for the artist, fade with time & require new work
- * If I find that a work in progress starts to feel too much like something I have seen it's time to change direction
- * Who do I admire? Franz Kline, Andrew Wyeth, N.C. Wyeth, Gordon Smith, Jacques de Tonnancour and many others









Untitled (Blackbush), acrylic on canvas

Lois Huey-Heck

Microcosm—Macrocosm: the birth of the cosmos No. 1 to No. 12

When lots of water is applied to a non-absorbent surface or “ground” it remains wet for a long time. While the water just “sits there” I begin to add in watercolour which also remains fluid on the surface until evaporation succeeds. If the ground were absorbent, it would soak up the fluid and the pigment much more quickly fixing the water and the colour in place. On a smooth non-porous ground drying takes many hours.

Water colour pigments interact in certain ways when they encounter each other in this watery world. The heavier, more opaque yellow ochre most often pushes into and through the finer transparent staining pigments. I dance with it. I experience it more as midwifery than giving birth myself. I watch, I tend. I might drop in India ink or fluid acrylic. I might sop up excess fluid or create new “waterways” but I can’t make “this” happen.

When I work in this way I feel I am watching some of the basic physics of the earth at work. Density, fluidity, attraction, repulsion, bonding, settling, sedimentation, erosion, merging, amassing... in the microcosm we see the macrocosm and vice versa. From the great flaring forth to the division and clustering of cells the same great universal forces are at work.

I love watching the interplay of pigments and mediums—meeting, melding, rejecting, embracing, pushing, pushing back against each other... Truly, watching paint dry has never been more fun.

Art making in my adult years has provided time and space in which to explore, discover, fail, experiment, grow... In the last decades I have gone from endeavouring to live for the art and the art-making itself to more diverse (less focussed one might say) uses of creative capacity. Instead of the art using me as a conduit to get imagery into the world—or me living my life in service of art—I more consistently rely on my art-making practices to make sense of the world, to heal, to ingest challenging ideas, to expand my consciousness. To play, to enjoy to make community. I trust myself and this way of engaging the inner and outer worlds more all the time.





Microcosm Macrocosm 8, watercolour, India ink, fluid acrylics and wax on Yupo paper





Microcosm Macrocosm 11, watercolour, India ink, fluid acrylics and wax on Yupo paper

Jude Clarke & John Lent



A Cubist Prague: ‘no trip into the ordinary...’

When you set forth in words like this, it's not as if you will the words to a final logic so the words become a simulacrum of something---the way a photograph seems to stop time, or a portrait copies part of something. It's that you trust the words, like music, by starting out in the earth ground of the body, in the concrete field the body is registering around itself, will move into both the body and that electrical field around it, and by some bizarre circuitry, reach beyond both to that other matrix that is also there, that resists ordinary logic, that rushes the heart and the mind and surprises both, and is as close as we can get to saying what the breath of being is. So it's not that the words copy. They are set forth babbling, as probe. They find things. They open things up. They become something. [...the young woman feeling sorry for me in the bakery earlier, forgiving me my awkward lack of confidence in her words, her language, and grinning at me so generously beyond both sets of words, she restored me to the bakery, pulled me back into my body standing in front of her from a point of view that was from farther on down the line, when I was already looking back at this moment and making fun of myself in it, full of swagger of course, the traveller. The raconteur. She rescues me from that and insists on placing me here, now, in this garden, my feet on the ground, her many gestures a cubist blessing from all sides simultaneously. Who would have thought that when I was starting out here? This is no trip into the ordinary...]











The Lake Country Art Gallery informs and builds community through enriching and sometimes challenging exhibitions. It offers diverse and inclusive programming and gives space to artists in varied artistic practices. It is accessible, engages the local community and beyond, and fulfils its role with a strong, contemporary voice.

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