



MICHAEL ABRAHAM APOLOGUES

ART GALLERY AT EVERGREEN



© Evergreen Cultural Centre and Michael Abraham, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGUES
Astrid Heyerdahl, Visual Arts Manager

ARTIST STATEMENT
Michael Abraham

WORKS BY MICHAEL ABRAHAM

Fishbowl in the Sky

Red Carpet

Top Card

A Good Yield

Dreamers, Schemers and Streamers

Riding the Bull

The Offering - Eros

Tackling the Beast

Blind Faith

Good Citizen

Mia Santa

Wide Open

Real Tissues

Arms Dealer

Boys/Balloon Fight

Coronation Day

Yin Yang Business Man

Destined

Dog Eat Dog

The Big Fish

The Cart Returning Home

MICHAEL ABRAHAM APOLOGUES

Art Gallery at Evergreen
July 20 - August 31, 2013

With a phenomenological and psychological slant, Michael Abraham observes society and politics at play. Although he does not advocate for a specific religion, philosophy or method of living, he visualizes catch-phrases, metaphors and parables with whimsy, bemusement and contrasting veracity in order to engage with us, his audience, and to encourage us to question and laugh at our daily context.

Michael Abraham, can be viewed as a modern-day Pieter Bruegel. As an exceptionally talented narrator who depicts with brilliance, hilarity and obsessive detail, our *Dog Eat Dog* world. The physicality of the work is also evident—the time and compulsion, “the dance”, as Michael puts it, required to complete paintings with such extraordinary detail and painstaking purpose captivates us as we move through the layers and levels of each painting. We encourage you to spend time in front of each painting and sculpture, to examine every detail as you dive into the larger meaning of the work.

Evergreen Cultural Centre would like to thank Michael Abraham for his incredible talent and dedication to his unique practice and to the development of this exhibition. We would also like to thank Mark Reddekopp and Gallery Jones for their tireless effort to support Michael Abraham in his career and to assist in bringing together such a wonderful collection of Abraham’s work. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank all of the collectors who loaned us their paintings for this exhibition—this show would not exist without you!

Astrid Heyerdahl
Visual Arts Manager
Evergreen Cultural Centre

AN ARTIST STATEMENT BY MICHAEL ABRAHAM

So many thoughts. So little time.

My work can be many things from light and playful, reverent, awe inspired, philosophical, questioning. That is not fully the case for the works selected for this exhibition. These works take on what can be called a yin-yang veracity. They are light and dark, serious and playful. Looking back at these works that encompass a few of the many painted over the past 20 years, I think they capture the yin-yang of life, but leaning a bit more to the darker side. I am playful by nature, or was as a child, but life presents its many faces over a lifetime, and as I am aware of each new thing, be it good or not so much so, I deal with these in my work. I think that is the nature of a true artist, one who becomes aware and grows into the work. I hope to have many more miles on the journey; here are some of the mind routes I’ve taken so far. Sometimes there is a sentimentality that isn’t so revered in the cooler circles, but I feel deep down inside I have stayed true to my own vision. As one of my professor said “an artist must have a thick skin to carry his vision forward.” Mine is not a set vision, but an ever-changing one, influenced by experiences along the way, influenced by births, deaths, celebrations, struggles, thoughts, influences, distractions, surprises, lust ... my observations....

The more enigmatic something is the more meaning it can have: With anything, it has the meaning we give it, or can give it.

It was Stanley Spencer who said :

“When I lived in Cookham I was disturbed by a feeling of everything being meaningless. But quite suddenly I became aware that everything was full of special meaning and this made everything holy... I observed this sacred quality in most unexpected quarters.”

I like this sentiment.

**I often jokingly tell my kids that I colour for a living,
"Daddy has to go to the studio and colour."**

But making compositional images involves so much more. There is the developing skill and technical side, materials, permanence, texture, glazing, scumbling, varnishing. And there is the visual side: shape, line, mood, colour, form, (lighting), contrast, areas of action, and areas of quiet... I draw from my imagination, so I have a lot to figure out to pull all the elements together. I use a mirror sometimes for checking anatomy, expressions, and also spend a lot of time staring at things to see how light and shadow, and colour work. I don't usually use photo references. Sometimes I think it would be easier in some ways to paint from life or from a photo, but I choose to pull things out of my head to make things look a certain way, the way my mind's eye wants to see the final piece, getting what I desire. It allows me a lot of freedom in creating to not be bound by realism.

There is the physical act of making the art... painting is a dance in front of the canvas thousands of times moving back from the work, raising and lowering the easel, brushing on and pushing the paint, mixing colour, stretching the canvas...

And then there are the ideas! The work is not arbitrary, although sometimes seemingly so. It is because there are so many things to think about, and so many possibilities... I am intrigued by the fact that artists have a lot of time to think... and a lot to think about. For me, it is a major part of the vocation... thinking, formulating ideas, assessing purpose, relevance, limitations, judging constantly, philosophizing, thinking about life and the world, and human nature... There is a lot that goes into the content of the work.

The Shape of Content by Ben Shahn is a book I often think about, in terms of explaining how an artist thinks.

One thing I've noticed is that nothing is perfect; there are strengths and weaknesses in everything. Indeed, weaknesses can be strengths... always moving forward, finding the way... Life is not black and white; there are no absolutes.

My professor Tom LaPierre used to say, "*All things happen at once*", which kind of explains Surrealism. Nothing one writes or says is etched in stone, because the opposite may be true at the same time... maybe. Truth depends on the perspective one takes, and where one falls in regards to situations presented. Left or Right, experienced or innocent, beautiful or horrid, cynical or optimistic, sacred or profane... I think my work evolves from innocence to awareness, and tries to capture this.

I am often told the works have layers, and not just simple illustrations, and I hope they engage the viewer in some way beyond simple. They are all just thoughts, or thought provokers. Everything is open to interpretation. Even I don't believe in my statements absolutely even though they often sound absolute...LOL.

I like when I deal with my thoughts visually as I go about making the work. It is one of the pleasures of being a visual artist. The paintings are the artifacts of the thought process. I am not a linear thinker. I am more of a lateral thinker, with checker-board thoughts jumping around, trying to link contrasting thoughts, and lots of the thoughts about the same situation, trying to figure out the game of life... cut-up poetics in the mind.

I have an appreciation of a traditional art object such as a painting or sculpture. It goes counter to many current art trends.

Narrative work is often negated by the more conceptually oriented art movements of the day, but compositional imagery is as relevant as always. Subjectivity is unabashed. I often laugh that the most conceptual of art is subjectivity in denial... what a human, or humans deem relevant is subjective. Words are often used to negate one thing and promote the other, ie (left wing – right wing). But I am fond of many ways. If the viewer can bring oneself into the work, without being worried about being judged as sentimental, sensitive, vulnerable, and feeling based, I would like this... This is often where the humanity is. As Leonard Cohen sings, "*There is a crack in everything. That's where the light gets in*".

The great artists of the past are still the great artist of the today due in large part to of their subjective nature. A few artists that I love are Fra Angelico, Peter Brueghel, J.A.D. Ingres, Pablo Picasso, Stanley Spencer... so many greats. Narrative art is often more visceral, intuitive, holistic. Conceptual art is often more analytical and dissecting. Both are relevant and important.



Fishbowl in the Sky, 2012
oil on linen
36x40

Sometimes words are used to express what a picture can express. Easily readable images such as fishbowl in the sky, one can say "not much room in that there heavenly fishbowl". The image to me alludes to humanity's ongoing use and depletion of natural resources. There is the ongoing media mention of Human consumption and waste, all are at the forefront of environmental issues. As global population ever increases, I sometimes think the world is no more than a fishbowl in the sky. It is a closed system where man has become the dominant gluttonous species. It's a huge petri dish exploding with an outbreak of man.

A lot of environmental artists would paint nature, nice nature pictures, wildlife etc...and hope that their imagery will move people to be more concerned caring and aware of nature and our fragile balance needed to maintain this precious ecosystems. Sometimes it brings me sorrow, and yet I too am part of the problem. Melting icecaps, plastic sludge as large whatever country. Somewhere in the middle of the pacific ocean, over-population of people, overfishing, and on and on and on... Can humans deal with things when they've gone too far?

And so this is my take on major issues. Sustainability, and biodegradable are the order of the day. Resources are finite...

Fish know not the waters they swim in...

"As flies are to wanton boys, we are to the gods"
- William Shakespeare



Red Carpet, 2010
oil on linen
48x40

Cult of celebrity, paparazzi, manufactured stars, adoration of the Hollywood types, media scrutiny of the celebrity, ogling, raise you up and tear you down, and enjoying the process as a spectator sport. I am aware of the portrayal of the ideal, versus the reality of people as human, not gods.

Also I think that the masses are diverted from real issues, "reality TV" takes us away from focusing on reality, or the necessity to deal with real issues. So many things, is it best to just stay dumb? I too am curious about the stars, and follow a certain celebrity all the time... fun and weird! ... and laugh at my own interest in things that really don't matter to me....

We all need a diversion, something to take us to another place, real or imagined... I liked the idea of making the male 'star' a little befuddled by the adoring fans... a little mocking of the stars going on too.

And yet we all need to have a mirror to check in with ourselves as well....



Top Card, 2010
oil on linen
60x48

Thinking about the economic collapse, the tenuous balance the markets, how things need to be balanced to function, the past few years has had so much turmoil in markets, economic. So much hope, or steady placement (or maybe a bit of sneaky sleuthing) to make it by without the entire system collapsing... capitalism in question... the brick tie is the illusion of stability and strength, the house of cards representing the mortgage crises. I think this can a capable person too... everything under control, and doing a good job of it!

I think this also represents the nature of life to find the balance in all things; the light we hold onto, or in this painting maybe the light is shining on the impending collapse, or the delicate balance. I sometimes hope to capture my own angst about situations in a humorous yet poignant way. I think of this in relation to my success and career as well, it is a delicate balance to make things go just so...

it is my nature to see things as fragile.... Seeing the transience of all things: I also realized through these recent years how sometimes one person's success relies on others' failures.... The supposed greed of Wall Street had to have repercussions, hence the slowdown...

the vulnerability of success....



A Good Yield, 2010
oil on linen
36x32

The word 'yield' having two definitions I liked combining a good caution or yield sign, don't fall down the hole, a sign you may see at a mining area. A good yield, juxtaposed against the definition of yield meaning a good harvest.

In this painting I tried to create a Bernie Madoff type fool who promises you the world. The helicopter pad is a tip of the hat to the Bre-X scandal and the disappearance of geologist Michael de Guzman who died by falling from a helicopter

From Wikipedia:

Bernard Lawrence "Bernie" Madoff (born April 29, 1938) is an American former stockbroker, investment advisor, financier, and white collar criminal. He is the former non-executive Chairman of the NASDAQ stock market, and the admitted operator of a Ponzi scheme that is considered to be the largest financial fraud in U.S. history.

Bre-X Minerals was company involved in a major gold mining scandal when it reported it was sitting on an enormous gold deposit. Bre-X Minerals collapsed in 1997 after the gold samples were found to be a fraud. The fraud began to unravel rapidly on March 19, 1997 when Filipino Bre-X geologist Michael de Guzman died by falling from a helicopter in Indonesia. His body was found four days later in the jungle, mostly eaten by animals and identified from molars and a thumbprint. A week later, on March 26, 1997 the American firm Freeport-McMoRan, a prospective partner in developing Busang, announced that its own due-diligence core samples, led by Australian geologist Colin Jones, showed "insignificant amounts of gold". A frenzied sell-off of shares ensued and Suharto postponed signing the mining deal.



Dreamers, Schemers and Streamers, 2009

oil on linen

48x72

I also think about the excesses supposedly abundant before the collapse of an empire... mention of this in history books, i.e. the fall of Rome...

Decadence and collapse... Illusions of the art world?

I often think about the emperor's new clothes, or how people are led by others, all to the grand promise of all things being paved with gold, but how the masses are joined together to watch a massive apocalypse... the main figure in the front roasting marshmallow, sort of like Nero fiddling while Rome burned. Or possibly a man in the know, who knows what is happening, and may profit in some way from his smarts. *"No worries mate."*

The allusion to followers being blind, Timothy Findlay's story of Noah building the arc is a powerful novel of seeing things in absolutes, versus seeing the nuance... *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is one of my favorite novels.

There is always the official story, and alternate takes on what happens.

I liked the idea of the big party somehow coming to a grand ending... (Wall Street unabashed greed is a saying in the news as of late). I loved the idea of many going to a big bash and streamers, and the unseeing one with the flame setting the whole thing ablaze.

Sometimes we want change, sometimes change happens unexpectedly, in a way that changes everything... or not. On and on it goes....

Memes?

Following each other too closely?

Conformity to stupidity?



Riding the Bull, 2006
oil on linen
54x44

This painting is part of the bullworks series, a set of paintings that were inspired by a trip to New York, an interest in Buddhism. *"Taming the bull is taming the mind."*

Riding the bull, if systems are in place to make things happen autonomously then we reap the rewards, so I think this is a painting about having things flow, the floating on air, everything set up right... the promise of taking all the right steps and having whatever system unfold to our liking... red attracts the bull, red is the colour of sexuality as well. The music box a song playing, pleasure ride, ease... carrying on, dreamlike... Tame, controlled.

The following is from *Ten Bulls* by Kakuan (1100-1200)
Transcribed by Nyogen Sensaki and Paul Reys

The bull is the eternal principle of life, truth in action. The ten bulls represent sequent steps in the realization of one's true nature.

This sequence is as potent today as it was when Kakuan (1100-1200) developed it from earlier works and made his paintings of the bull.

5. Taming the Bull

The whip and rope are necessary, Else he might stray off down some dusty road. Being well trained, he becomes naturally gentle. Then, unfettered, he obeys his master.

Comment: When one thought arises, another thought follows. When the first thought springs from enlightenment, all subsequent thoughts are true. Through delusion, one makes everything untrue. Delusion is not caused by objectivity; it is the result of subjectivity. Hold the nose-ring tight and do not allow even a doubt.

**ARTIST STATEMENT FROM BULLWORK SERIES:
*Bull Works!***

Transcending the bull is one's life work.

Bull Works! is a painterly journey, a search for meaning, purpose and coming to the understanding that having and wanting are two different worlds. While I know I have much to be grateful for – most especially my family and people who buy and appreciate my work, I still feel something is missing. It is an inner nagging for something more – this unknown something that propels the search.

To further explore this feeling, I decided in the fall of 2005 to go to New York for a couple of months to get another, perhaps expanded perspective. While I went seeking one thing, I returned with quite another – an enhanced viewpoint on my desires, angst and purpose. I spent many days in the Metropolitan Museum as well as others, attended art openings, took some drawing sessions, sat in on interesting lectures, and met new friends. Alone one evening, the following image came to me: it was of a man grasping a bed that was turning into a charging bull. It was so powerful, it stuck with me; and while it is one I have yet to paint, it is certainly definitive of my on-going journey.

I met a new friend there who called the experience I was going through “*the muse at work - the bitch and goddess that hel/she is.*” The gift and the curse being one! Mid life is on the doorstep, and my muse is the director of its perfect timing. I had many thoughts about “wanting” as I called it, something the Buddhists call “desire” ... wanting to end certain feelings, begin others, get more out of life and living.

When I returned to Vancouver I read some short stories, amongst which I found a Buddhist one called “*Ten Bulls!*” In reading this story, the bull represents the mind, and I added the interpretation that is also the ego. It reflected much of the search I was on - like how there is a definite universality to life's stages, especially as it relates to one's spiritual awakening. Using the story as a departure point, I began sketches that brought out some of the paintings in *Bull Works!*

It also set me thinking about the many bullish markets of survival - bull as the modern term for what is wrong (bull), illusions (bull), acknowledging the testosterone laden inner world and it's desperate need to create at any expense, and similarly the outside world's ongoing bullish nature to expand, perpetuating an illusion of man's mastery via material obsession, while ignoring its environmental, psychological and spiritual cost. The forces of nature and the

social structures of society are not always the gentle ones I thought of in my youth. Understanding what is metaphorically called ‘the bull’, growing from, going beyond and hopefully not adding to it (at least not too much!) is something for which I daily strive.

Upper most in my observations too is the phenomenon of time and its passing. While time is certainly fleeting and ephemeral; the Buddha has a more precise way of putting it - “impermanence.” We ride on the planet in the middle of nowhere. Imagery evolves from feeling, as much as from intellect. I feel “sweet sorrow”, as my lady says. I hope to come to a Buddha-like enlightenment laughing at the paradox of the grand insignificance of it all, as well as the grand glory.

The process of painting *Bull Works!* has allowed me to think through many thoughts. The unknown feeling is still within me, but now I choose to call it a mystery, and embrace it as an acceptable part of the journey.

**Michael Abraham
July 2006**



The Offering – Eros, 2006
soap stone carving
11" plus base

Some of the oldest sculptures found are of voluptuous female forms.

A sculpture, my first soap stone, a tip of the hat to the theme of Eros and death going hand in hand... there is a tiny skull attached to the back of the female figure, a Venus of Willendorf full figure nude, sweet, pleasurable, comforting, a provider, offering her breast with a pleasurable innocence. Innocent, and Eve, I liked trying my first image in stone as a Venus, prime mother, nurturer, gifting, sensuous, sweet.... Life is the giver and the taker....

There is the light and the shadow,
Life is the gift with the ever present hint of shadow, death.



Tackling the Beast, 2006
chlorite stone carving

Started and finished within a week and a half, obsessed, finished early in the morning of the day the 'Bullworks' exhibit opening...

My second attempt at carving. I did not know stone carving was something I was happily and readily able to do, a pleasure to carve. The bull represents the thing we have to cope with, address, face, tackling the challenges of life. The bull is also a beast, from one angle the piece is a two-horned bull, from another angle he is a one horned beast. The figure, as I was carving reminded me of the slaves sculptures of Michelangelo, trapped in the rock, but emerging, a really neat process. I was also interested in the texture variation of the stone, and the male figure is also kind of just hanging on, or trying to move the bull, pulling on him to direct him in the way he wants to go... the beast is somehow un-swayed by the man's action... control, no control....



Blind Faith, 2005
oil on linen
48x72

This piece is about not knowing what is on the other side, about having faith in the process, and yet there are the 'sharps', the dangers lurking, the things we fear may happen if we make a change for ourselves, the Buddhist laughing gently at the anxiety of the scenario... the small figure in the distance leaning into the wind, trusting it will hold him up... The pillow could be the dream, the idea that life is all just a thought and then gone. Or waking up from innocence and stepping over into the dangers of life ... I painted this at a time when I was deciding on what to do with a business situation I was in... blind faith, fear. I often like to paint barefoot figures, could represent vulnerability, comfortableness, trustiness... The sun a big ball of fire, and yet in this case comforting and warm...

I love how the biggest scariest ball of fire in the sky thousands of times bigger than the earth represents warmth and comfort in visual imagery... the dichotomy of an objects symbol and it's actuality. And yet it is both. The symbol representing something else, faith, comfort, god, all-mighty power... the source... the bubbles in the air, transient small films of soap suds, here and then gone, pop...it was an interesting experience to try and paint the light... I love figuring out light in a painting!



Good Citizen, 2005
oil on linen
42x54

Good Citizen.. painted around the time post 9-11, good citizen, picking up her poo, doing her social duty, spies in trees, surveillance, sewer, rebel teen, and a figure to the left looking out of window to see what is happening outside after getting a view of the world through the internet, yahoo... there is a secretive meeting under an umbrella table, a woman veiled in a burka, a man on a roof ready to drop a bomb, and man hiding in tree to show the absurdity of it all. With this painting I was trying to process all the things going on in the world. And living in a Vancouver suburb, just seeing the good citizen picking up after her dog, oblivious to the crazy world around.... Like Plato's story, *The allegory of the cave*, where people in a cave looking at shadows on the wall, and trying to describe reality from the observation of shadows, as opposed to them turning to see the source, which is the fire itself. There are many shadows. Trying to put it all together can be an interesting challenge...

From Wikipedia:

"The Allegory of the Cave" may be related to Plato's Theory of Forms, according to which the "Forms" (or "Ideas"), and not the material world of change known to us through sensation, possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality. Only knowledge of the Forms constitutes real knowledge. In addition, *The Allegory of the Cave* is an attempt to explain the philosopher's place in society: to attempt to enlighten the "prisoners."



Mia Santa, 2004
oil on linen

The woman, modeled (sort-of) after my great aunt, who would not tolerate the hoarding and patenting of seeds, the man, representing maybe a Mon Santo employee, boss, owner, and she, tapping on his shoulder, ready to possibly whack him with a rolling pin... she would not put up with this. Is she the conscience that the business of business may be lacking? All just a thought... Do we still live in a feudal system, disguised as a free market? And if we do, do the lords have a social responsibility to the masses, and to the planet? I remember reading *The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense* by John Ralston Saul. In it he defines words and sayings that are used to mean one thing, such as free markets, and then he defines them in what they actually are, something totally different than what the words may sound like they mean. Free markets are markets driven by exploitation at the expense of the individual for the sake of power and control, so the markets are 'free' to those it works for, a social order or for the sake of the system.

"The free market may be a good, bad or insufficient idea, but, in any case, it is just a crude commercial code. Now it is regularly equated with or given credit for or even precedence over the freedom of man. But the freedom of man is a moral statement on the human condition, both in the practical and in the humanist sense. To equate it with a school of business is to betray a certain confusion. An unconscious unease" - John Ralston Saul.

Progress is a word that can be used and have both positive and negative connotations...



Wide Open, 2002
oil on linen
48x30

Sketched out before 9-11, the horse representing the life force in Jungian symbolism, the horse jumping beastly to nab the peace dove... sometimes an image just comes, and the explanation is there for the deciphering... I sensed something was wrong, doom, pre 9-11, and this image may also be an extension of the unicorn tapestries that hang in the Cloisters in upper NYC. I sensed that sometimes life is beastly, still do...

I remember walking over the Brooklyn bridge pre 9-11 and feeling a darkness and a shudder when looking at Manhattan ... it was one of the darkest feeling I have ever had.... hmmm.

"I know there isn't no beast—not with claws and all that, I mean—but I know there isn't no fear either...Unless—...Unless we get frightened of people."
- Piggy from Lord of the Flies.

Siddharatha was highly gifted and mastered everything that he was exposed to. But was a loner and an introvert. One of Siddhartha's cousins, Devadatta, was very jealous of the prince and did cruel things to hurt him. One day Devadatta shot a flying swan. The prince caught the bird as it fell, removed the arrow, and nursed the swan back to life. Devadatta demanded the swan from Siddharatha, claiming it as his prize. But Siddharatha refused. So they brought their disagreement to the royal court. The judges awarded Siddharatha the swan, saying, *"Life is more valuable than anything else in the world. Whoever saves a life is in harmony with the Truth, and owns it."*

A selection from Siddharatha – stories by Grandpa
www.indolink.com/Kidz/buddha.html



Real Tissues, a.k.a. *Placards*, a.k.a. *All the World's a Stage*, 2003
oil on linen
54x72

Post 9-11, where were all the protesters, I was thinking how the masses may be so ill informed that they didn't know what to protest anymore... I thought gone were the days of the hippy youth, Vietnam era.

In the moment where war was ready to be declared in Iraq... Not sure what the right decision was, only time will tell, but was war the answer... This is a satirical take on people not being informed enough to know what to even protest, and yet the masses knew something was wrong... here is a journal entry of sorts that I wrote at the time I first exhibited the painting:

Real Tissues
A painting by Michael Abraham

The painting 'Real Tissues' is the largest of twenty-one paintings that were included in the show titled 'Power Play', an exhibition held at the now defunct Simon Patrich Gallery in Vancouver, Canada, in May of 2003.

Full Title of painting:
Real Tissues a.k.a. Statement Art a.k.a. Placards a.k.a. All the World is a Stage (But Quiet On the Set), oil on linen, 54"x72 inches, painted August 2002 to January 2003

Conceptually 'Real tissues' is a painting that speaks to the power of the media, not in exploring issues but instead creating diversion and spectacle. The painting displays a wanting of recognition by diverse points of view, while satirically humanizing the concept of commerciality and slant. There are no real focused points of view in this piece, almost as if the figures aren't sure what to protest, or too many issues overlapping to sort through, and no solid information. This painting is an acknowledgement of our overly saturated media age, but saturated with what? The characters are not interested in the "show", a possible unveiling of a bikini clad naive, wanting more relevant, humanistic points of view expressed. Some characters are feeling 'the fear', (i.e. anxiety over oppression of peoples, health care, industrial military complex, globalization, environmental issues, war on drugs, war...) but the big man continues along, assuring that all is well. The 'show' has easy answers to complex situations, or makes no attempt at all, just a little 'T and A'; an elderly woman's answer to the stupidity of the 'show' may be reflected in the simplicity of her sign "don't be an asshole". Another figure in the painting carries a Christian cross, overlapping a cardboard sign begging for real issues, hence' real 't'issues', and the woman having synthetically enlarged breasts gently readying to remove her top(?) for the camera may imply wanting reality/real breast tissues as opposed to breast enhancement....

As I was composing the painting with placard overlapping placard, the aesthetics of Matisse' cut-out painting 'the snail' wanted to be tucked in among all the placards, and so it was... Allah Hoo has been one of my favorite songs since about 1987 and is by Sufi singer Nusrat fateh Ali Khan, and translates to mean 'Praise God'. "More On" is a play on words or 'Moron', and relates to the Canadian diplomat making an under-her-breath comment on George W. Bush's government at the height of the UN/Iraq situations of 2003. Her comments became more of a media story than any other in Canada for a few days than any actual facts related to the UN / US / Iraq situation. "Fuddle-duddle" is a

former Canadian prime minister's way of saying " F***. The whistle 'blow this' sign is related to Enron, etc... "All for one and one for all", reads as "All for ne and ne for all"... I was having fun with all of this. One tiniest of signs reads 'Tommy Kinkade sucks", a knock at the 'renowned' painter of saccharine fairy cottages who has made millions of dollars while artists of somewhat greater intellectual merit struggle to survive; maybe relating it to how I see television.... ie public television versus the major networks... (note that I might be implying a jealousy for his success!) The sly graffiti man to the left is emblemizing the wall with the logo of a famous burger distributor; so much for being aware of any issues... Gone are the days when Graffiti called for "Jello Biafra for president!". Environmental, social, political and ethical issues have so many layers, almost overwhelming, it is easier to just enjoy the show, the game, 'real tv', take in the promo and let everything just unfold as it may! "Real tissues" is my way of summing up how I saw things at that particular juncture in my life. Is television the opiate of the masses? ...Hmmm... Yup.



Arms Dealer, 1999
oil on linen
30x42

Inspired, if I can use that phrase, from a newspaper article about an arms dealer in Calcutta who had benefitted from international arms sales, and was now ready to give back to the community... I thought 'what a prick', a benevolent fool, and yet these are the power players that are in the world we live in.... the boot footprint on the box was made by using one of my shoes as a stamp, putting paint on it and pressing it onto the canvas. The multi-coloured arms represent all the peoples of the world affected by political strife and warfare, no one untouchable, except of course for the arms dealer himself all decked out and looking oh so splendid. The blue arm - even the gods are game in this cruel world of international arms dealing. The newspaper article kept mentioning his pristine dress and his 'self import'.



Boys/Balloon Fight, 2000
oil on linen
48x30

Strategy, and being hit by the unexpected, just when you have a plan, something comes in to counter act....

Play, and mischief...

a playful punky painting of being ready to attack , as one is planning to go over the wall to throw the water balloon, another comes in from the side with the surprise attack.

When I was a child I remember my older brother ducking on the roof as another of my brothers was below coming around the corner... a good memory... this has the seriousness of play, and was a painting included in a show from May 2001 called "Play".



Coronation Day, 1998-9
oil on linen
48x44

After having seen so many coronation of the virgin type paintings in my european studies, I thought it was a nice idea to paint a painting where everyone is crowned, a devine concept indeed. This was painted just after my first son was born... I work from my imagination, but paint characters sometimes based on reality, the bald figure is my son's god-father, and the woman on the pillow a from my head version of my pretty lady.... When creating a painting, compositionally I like playing with intertwined figures, a challenge and a pleasure to do....



Yin Yang Business Man

Open to interpretation...

fullness of life and death... an image that came to me, but with no intention or meaning other than that it needed to be.

salesman, P.R man, ruthless pleasant warrior, he ignoring what is attached to him, a part of him. Responsibility

Renewal, ebb and flow,

a man carrying on regardless of the skeletons... shedding the past, or the yin and yang of responsibility, of the nature of life...
Or Present ourselves all as angels, but not always so...

or maybe this is a man who, not young, has experienced many or all things and carries on with an understanding of the nature of life, business as usual...

We carry on regardless of the fact of death, life is the gift, carry on.

A friend of mine often says "we are all saints."



Destined, 2000
oil on linen
48x44

Decision making, some things are meant to be, i.e. the happy face, and me being an artist....

As I wrote above in the intro paragraphs:

I am intrigued by the fact that artists have a lot of time to think... and a lot to think about. For me, it is a major part of the vocation... thinking, formulating ideas, assessing their purpose, relevance, their limitations, judging constantly, philosophizing, looking for the content of the work. Thinking about life and the world, and human nature... There is a lot that goes into a work.



Dog Eat Dog

A common saying "dog eat dog"...

I have done a few dog images over the years. This one, A funny image... Is it another take on the way business works? Sports? Competition? Does the species cannibalize itself for its immediate gain? Different breeds seen gnarling each other, and somehow gently so... like they are all aware of their actions.... The battle of nations? Is the big dog making a commentary on it all? The smallest dog how I feel sometimes? The cat... the pillar regal, strength... the chosen one. Safety of the one above, sleeping at ease... we all want to be the one at the top... comfort.... I always dogs unabashed nature, something humans often pretend doesn't exist.

One can get away with a dog or animal doing what a human would be embarrassed to see a human do. I think this is a funny painting. I love old paintings, Flemish genre scenes and landscapes. They often have a little dog that can be seen peeing or mating in the corner of the most majestic landscape.



The Big Fish

Bronze

14.5x14x14

Another 'nature of life' piece, the nature of nature, the nature of business, The nature of success. The nature of defeat.

The nature of nature.... All things devoured in the end, the universe itself. Enjoy as best you can, there is nothing else to do.

Shakespeare:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits, and Are melted into air, into thin air: And like the baseless fabric of this vision, The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on; and our little life Is rounded with a sleep.

As I have mentioned above somewhere, it is my nature to see things as fragile.... Seeing the transience of all things.

The Cart Returning Home, 1995



A drawing of this painting *The Cart Returning Home* was originally drawn in 1991, while studying in Italy. It was done during the first Gulf War. As I was studying the art of the renaissance and medieval art, I was amazed that humanity somehow still had the same issues of power struggles, brutality, and violence to solve issues, only with a more modern means. I used the drawing to learn how to compose, and to express my thoughts on the absurdity of (some of) mankind's cruelty of war...

I was so naïve to the ways of the world in more ways than one...

The drawing was sold at my first ever 'show', in a restaurant later in the year. I spent two weeks on the drawing, and was asking 400\$ for it, which was a fairly low price at the time, but as I was starting out in my art career, and so I didn't want to price anything too high. Without asking me, the owner of the restaurant sold it for 200\$, a lot less than I was asking for. And then she wanted a commission of 100\$ I was so pissed-off at how undervalued this person saw my work, and how she did not consider my time, or efforts. She was just happy to make the sale. Ugh! From that moment on I vowed never to sell a painting for less than I thought I deserved (in terms of time, and energy, and skill, and overhead).

in 1994, I decided to paint a painting of the said drawing, and to never part with the painting, a reminder to never undervalue my work. It also reminds me of my year in Florence, and is an early example of my developing process. The painting remains in my living room to this day.



ART GALLERY AT EVERGREEN

1205 Pinetree Way, Coquitlam, BC V3B 7Y3

Curator

Astrid Heyerdahl, M.A., M.Ed.

Gallery Hours

12-5pm, Monday-Saturday

Free Tours: Saturdays, 2pm

Website

evergreenculturalcentre.ca

Words and Images by

Michael Abraham

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Learn more about our creative community, hear the latest news and find out about great promotions and opportunities at Evergreen Cultural Centre.

 /EvergreenCulturalCentre  @EvergreenArts