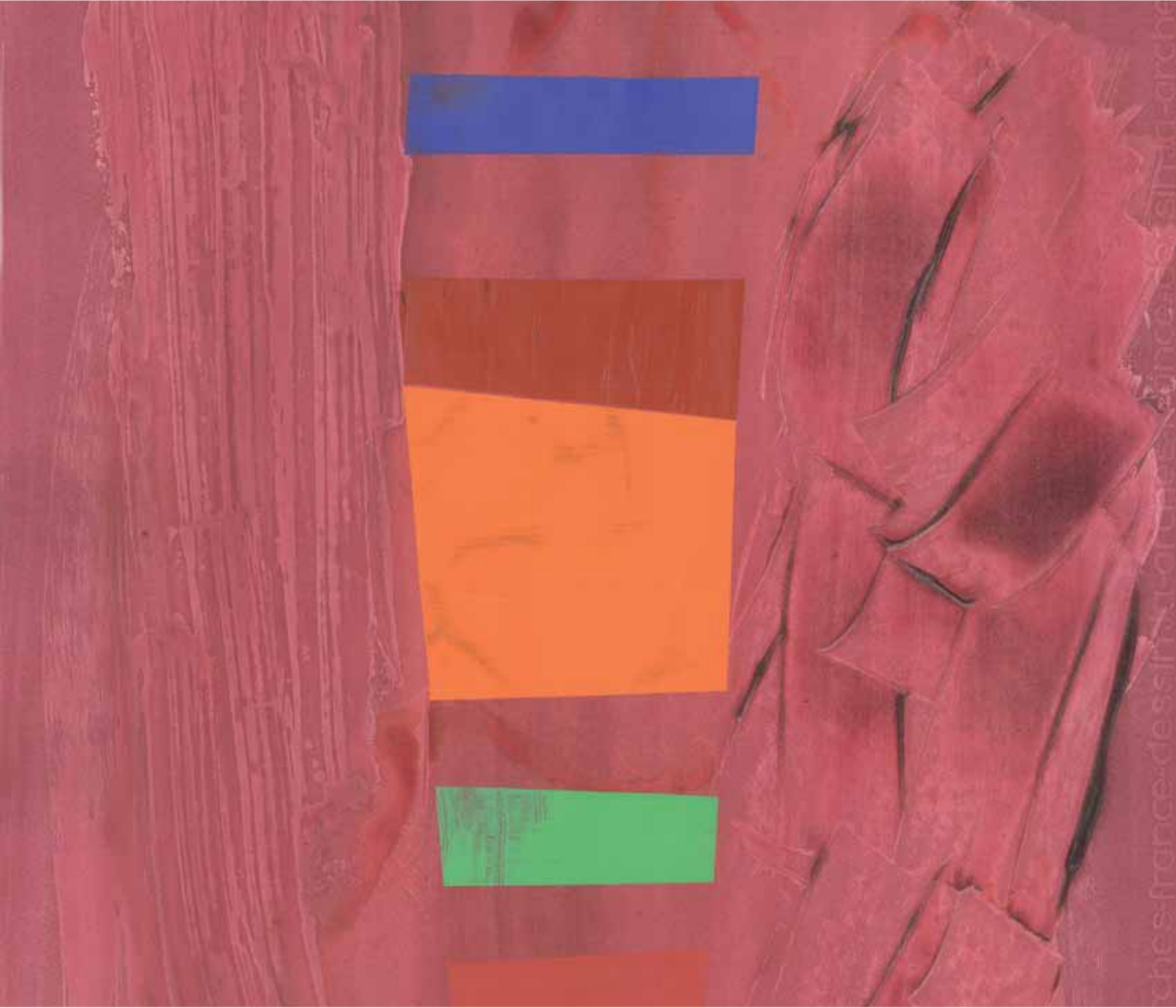


AUGUST 2014

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



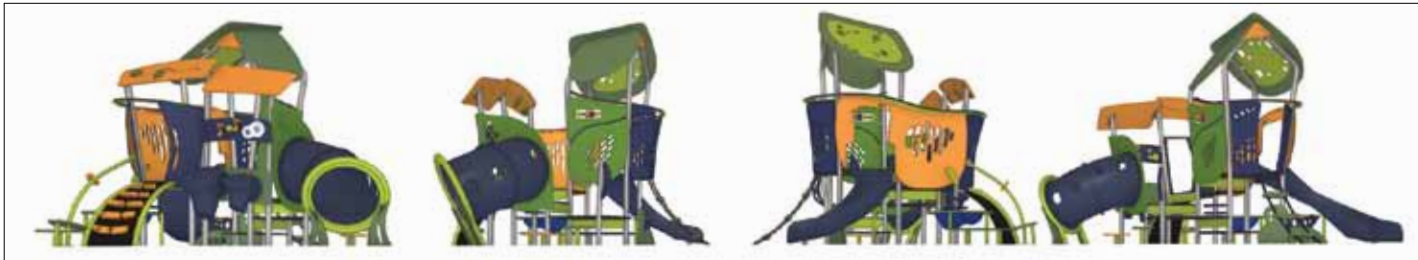
LINES OF SIGHT

Lines of Sight | Otter | Harmony | The Garden | Crow's Take on Man/Deer's Take on Man |
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Lines of Sight

By Illarion Gallant, MBCSLA,
BCSLA Island Chapter Rep.



Illarion Gallant, *Dirty Old Alligator*, 2014, Steel and granite maquette.

As the guest co-editor of the August 2014 issue of **SITELINES** I feel privileged to introduce the contributing artists. I have overwhelming admiration and respect for their collective body of visual and literary work. These submissions are a reflection of their passion, enthusiasm, and artistic skills, tempered by their ability to clearly “see” perceptible intellectual beauty.

As a professional artist and landscape architect, I draw from both disciplines to inform my design process. This issue of **SITELINES** is an opportunity to engage my colleagues in landscape architecture with selected artistic perceptions of our shared common landscape. The artist’s inherent abilities to see, perceive and create an emotive response to the landscape are similar to that of the Landscape Architect... albeit the medium differs somewhat. ▶



Cover Image: Dennis Evans, *Colour Stepping Stones*, 2014, Acrylic on paper, 22”x22”

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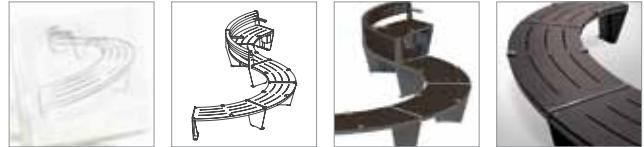
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 **MAGLIN™**

Continued from page 3.

Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane are both internationally acclaimed poets residing in Victoria, BC. Lorna and Patrick are Governor General's Award winners for poetry and Officers of the Order of Canada. Our relationship developed amid the intimacy of tearing apart and rebuilding their back garden. During this endeavour, Twyla and I came to appreciate their understanding of the landscapes from whence they came. They share a unique ability to capture and express unbridled love for the landscape, big skies, and space in elaborately woven stanzas.

Victoria, BC artists Agnes Ruest and Dennis Robert Evans are established painters whom have a long relationship with the vibrant Saskatchewan arts community including the historic Emma Lake Artists' Workshop. Agnes and Dennis's body of work attest to their historic place in the contemporary prairie tradition of both Canadian landscape and colour field painting. Their extensive knowledge about colour, scale, composition, as well as art history are evident in the visual depth of their work.

This edition also features Blair Ketcheson's photographic essay on the Canadian National Vimy Ridge Memorial, a succinct account of the role of the photographer as the Landscape Architect's eyes. Canada and the world are now acknowledging the centenary of the dawn of World War One. This horrific engagement was tragically measured by the loss of human potential amid a ravaged and muddied bucolic European landscape. Blair's essay touches on observing contemporary design changes to a memorial whose landscape continues to evolve from the ravages of war. Set within this landscape is the ever present stone sentinel which echos the depth of loss such tragedies sear into the Canadian psyche. **SL**

Otter

By Lorna Crozier

The river otter spotted on the lawn at twilight
was only passing through they thought, their faith
in fences and the closeness of the creek a block
or so away. When morning broke, the backyard pond
was stripped of lilies, marsh marigolds and rushes.
At the water's edge, a creamsycle turned out to be
the head of the Shubunkin who'd been with them
fifteen years. Two nights later the otter killed the others,
the koi they called The Golden One,
the Black Moors, the humpbacked carp.
The wildlife officer confirmed their fears.
When the fish ran out, the otter would crack
the turtles open, the smaller female first,
then the next, wider than a dinner plate.
A live trap, he told them, wouldn't work. Otters
were too smart for that. No, he wouldn't use a leg-hold;
he'd set a baited cage on the bottom of the pond,
the door would drop and the otter die by drowning.
We'll get back to you, they said. After the second raid,
they'd been so angry, so bereaved, they'd talked of ways:
rat poison—they had some in the shed—a rifle and a jacklight
though someone on the street was likely to complain.
"I've never killed a living thing," she said, "not
deliberately at least, except for insects." The murderer
inside her was as shocking as the finger bone
that met the air that time her skin split open. ►

Continued from page 5.

“That’s because you were a girl,” he said. Every boy he knew had a BB gun, a slingshot, and they’d used them. They walked around the fences, filled in the gaps, he built another gate. The otter tunneled under. They dug a trench and poured cement. That night they listened for the barking of the neighbour’s dog, wished the turtles could cry out. The trapper said the otter would thrash in the cage, it could take a while, the claws might rip the lining. Who could bear it? Months before, through the bedroom’s sliding doors, she’d seen an otter reclining on the front deck. Longer than the average man and lush— could it see her through the glass?—its life force so intense quills of light quivered all around it. Fleeshy but not an ounce of wasted flesh—surely it was female, this liquid creature, gleaming as if just risen from a bath and, indolent and vain, was posing for a painter or waiting for a slave to fetch some herring roe, some towels of Turkish cotton. How extravagant and human this conceit. Would things be better if she could see herself as otter? Feel that blast in the blood that means a different way of being deep inside, her body rising from a river, a sea-run fish thrashing in her grip, that shine on teeth and tongue the pearly scales of steelhead. **sl**

Harmony

By Patrick Lane

there is, in every harmony,
a broken thing, a fault
that holds the breath.

the stone placed in the path
breaks the step and offers
to the eye another way

of seeing. how we move
as the heart moves,
in its architecture

a sure and resonant
truth. what, in suffering,
makes us stop and see

what is and isn’t there?
the crippled ewe draws
the eye and so draws

hope the lamb she carries
lives. how the body arranges
its self, form its only content

or, if you climb high enough
you will see the old mountain
cabin where a single pane shines **sl**

the GARDEN

By Patrick Lane

praise the idea
the disorde red care
so the stone

you have placed
for beauty continues
with a studied delight

as if a god
had dropped it.
arrange, arrange

plant within
the casual border
your desire.

this is the web
and the ritual of
the web.

what discipline obtains
what way shall you stand
so your eye observes

nothing? the sand
raked into a sea
and the sea

an illusion of sand.
this garden, sprung
from a desire

for order, remains
a scream. it wants
you to want the

storm. it prepares
for rage, the sudden
irrevocable flood. **sl**

Crow's Take on Man

By Lorna Crozier

More rapacious than us, more needy.
They never take the shortest route
and use too many words when a caw would do.
Their hearts work like ours but theirs are bitter
in our beaks. Even snow can't take away the taste.
They're too simple to grasp there is an end to everything.
They don't know their shadows have blood in them.
They don't know their souls are spurs of bone.
O, what the marrow of the wind could teach them,
the rain's gizzard, the deer's blue lips and tongue.
Until they're ready, we won't let them
hear our songs. **sl**

Deer's Take on Man

By Lorna Crozier

We come upon them
at the edge of the clearing,
camouflaged by leaves, the wind
blowing their stench behind them.
The dark parts of them pour out
streams of light. Once we sense them,
it's too late. Some have an eye
deadly and quick, it burns through the air
and our blood pulls us down.

There are others who give us something else.
Their look is a kind of touching. It strokes
our mouths, rubs the velvet on our antlers.
There's a sadness to them then.
It's as if they want to crawl into our bellies
and live inside our skin. They don't know

the trees are seeing them,
they don't know the snow is seeing them,
they don't know the grass is a kindness
their flesh has given to the earth. **sl**

Landscape: Origins & Possibilities

By Agnes Ruest

In the year 2000, I found myself standing beside the easel used by Paul Cézanne in his studio garden at Aix-en-Provence.

I glanced down and noticed the remnants of several spent tubes of paint worn into the soil. It struck me then how connected we are to the past, how the process of painting in the landscape evolves from generation to generation but in essence really doesn't change.

Why am I part of this tradition, which inspires or drives me to create images in the landscape? To answer the question, I often reflect back to my childhood spent gazing out to the riverbank or across yellow fields on nightly walks with my father. He modelled the painter's gaze perfectly, pure appreciation for what he was seeing. Some say we are influenced by our ancestors' relationship to their landscape—in my case, by two ocean dwelling peoples, the Irish and French. The spaces that I am drawn to in my work perhaps reflect their experience of space and seaside vistas. I do know that my spaces are frequently expansive spaces with some distance or grandness to them... a river valley, distant hills, the sea. I also find intimate spaces of interest, particularly their randomness of objects and details, in for example a tangled ditch of wildflowers or a forest waterlily pond. I often find a small window in such intimate spaces

which leads the eye off into a distant vista and invites the viewer to investigate this contrast with me. I return often to places that interest me and find that there is infinite variation there and something new to observe every time I return to paint.

The painting medium which I prefer for on-site painting is watercolour, partly because it is so portable but mostly because of its immediacy. When painting on site, things change constantly—the light, the sky, the weather—time passes, your image emerges. To me, watercolour best suits this situation and process as it allows me to record observations quickly and fluidly and leaves a record of the day. Watercolour also deals particularly well with light in the landscape as the white of the paper's surface plays a significant role in the painting, reflecting the transparent colour with vibrancy.

I am fortunate to have been inspired in my work by senior artists of the Canadian landscape painting tradition, particularly Reta Cowley and Dorothy Knowles. Reta Cowley enjoys a stellar reputation among contemporary landscape painters and collectors across Canada. She was my first painting teacher and was terribly generous, sharing her favorite painting sites and encouragement with me. Reta painted on

site, sometimes in a snowstorm, well into her eighties. Dorothy Knowles is a highly respected landscape painter from Saskatoon, SK with an international following. She has pushed the limits for what can be done in a landscape painting and has integrated elements of other contemporary art movements such as colour field painting into her work. At the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, Dorothy would sometimes lead a caravan of up to a dozen landscape painters in their vans to one of her favourite painting spots. We all felt incredibly privileged to have been given the opportunity to paint alongside such an accomplished artist. In addition to Emma Lake, I have enjoyed the opportunity of painting in many wonderful locations across western Canada, Mexico, and Provence, France.

The answer to the question of what leads me to paint from the landscape has no easy answer but has to do with the richness and great variety of landscape elements wherever one goes. When all is said and done it might just be that the choice for a landscape painting motif is, as one of my trusted mentors once said, "Something in the foreground, something in the mid-ground and something in the far-ground". And to that I would add that what results can be magical or not. **SL**



Top:
Agnes Ruest,
Forest Fire Haze East of Osler,
Watercolour , 22"x 30".

Bottom:
Agnes Ruest,
At Spruce River,
Watercolour, 22"x 30".



Vimy Ridge

By Blair Ketcheson



The surreal haze of jetlag tinged the landscape of northern France as I drove from Paris to Arras. It was mid-afternoon and there was limited time to get to the site and prepare for the work slated for the morning. A palpable panic started to rise as a wave of fatigue rolled over me and I was forced to pull off the road.

A professional photographer walks a fine line, balancing a dizzying array of variables that come to bear on the final images that are delivered to the client. For us the physical world is a mixed blessing—a feast of visual delights and curiosities, and an

assorted tangle of irritants ranging from unfortunately placed power lines, stubborn authorities, imperfect weather, slow moving tourists, construction crews, garbage, and an astonishing proliferation of bad judgment and poor taste woven into our built environment. Out of this amalgam we are charged with the task of producing images that serve a variety of purposes, and that communicate in the desired manner to an audience with a wide range of interests and tastes. As well, these images need to compete for a viewer's attention amid the sea of visual stimulus that has become our world.

I was jarred awake and had to organize my thoughts as I rolled down the car window. There was a sense of relief realizing that it was still daylight and I would likely make it to the site in time to do what I needed. But I would first have to chat with the police who were making such a racket on the roof of the car.

“f8 and be there” was the phrase my friend Pat Morrow used to sign off his postcards (f8 is an average size aperture setting on a camera). Pat is a mountaineer who has spent his life travelling the world and photographing for books and magazines. He was the first person



to reach the highest summit on every continent. His tagline referred to the notion that to produce a memorable image one just needed to get to a remarkable location and have a camera of some sort on hand to get the image. This is of course a simplification, he is a talented photographer, but in general it served him well. For most of us and our day to day assignments, the remarkable location variable doesn't come into play. We are very fortunate when, or if, it happens.

Back on the road, I estimated that I would have an hour at best to find the site and then as quickly as possible figure out how to approach photographing it. I had notes from the client as to important features and view lines, a map of the site and a general sense of the topography. What I needed to do when I arrived was to determine ►



where the important views were, what time of day would be optimal to shoot them, what intrusions into the scenes to anticipate, and what types of images to try to get from each. I would make a shot list with notes to organize how I would do it. As I drove, I recalled that the site is 250 acres.

When I was hired by PFS Studio to photograph the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France I had a sense that it would be an interesting assignment. They had recently participated in the restoration of the Vimy Monument and grounds. The site commemorates the Canadian soldiers killed or presumed dead in the First World War in France who have no known grave. The Battle of Vimy Ridge is widely held to be a milestone in Canada's history and sense of nationhood. What I couldn't know was what a truly remarkable site and landscape it is.

The light was already fading when I pulled into a parking area at the site. I felt a need to rush, to run about and see as much as I could to get a sense what I had to do the next day. I knew that the actual memorial monument was the centerpiece of the site and would be the focus of my work, so I charged in that direction. I also knew that much of what PFS Studio dealt with was the landscape surrounding the monument and the details of that landscaping. I was thinking mechanically about the shot list: wide, medium, and tight shots; direction of light in the morning and evening; where would/could I find the one shot that captured the essence of the site; and where were all the view lines and elements that Greg (Smallenberg) listed for me in their office in Vancouver.

Every site that I photograph on assignment has challenges that have to be met. Some are so visually appealing that they almost photograph themselves, and some are so difficult that they are virtually unphotographable. In almost every instance, I take a similar approach to the task—working through the site from a set of standard



angles and points of view, recording a mix of wide reference shots and details, etc. In this way the important images are usually covered off. This site would present a different type of challenge—it's sheer significance.

I spotted the monument in the distance with the rapidly fading sunlight washing it. The sight forced me to stop. I had to pause and then continue the long walk toward the monument slowly. There was an immediate and overwhelming sense of approaching a sacred site, a landscape imbued with significant history and importance. I reacted to it as a visitor, in a sense a pilgrim, and felt torn between my emotional and professional responses. As I drew closer to the monument, and its size became apparent, I found myself almost overwhelmed by its solemn beauty. I wandered until it was dark, finding my bearings and getting acquainted with the site. In the pitch black I worked my way back to the car and drove to Arras to find a meal and a hotel.

A complication that I began to grapple with was that, in addition to commercial architectural photography, I also do black and white work as a purely creative endeavour. These two enterprises are very separate as they require different ways of seeing, different approaches and techniques, and very different frames of mind. The expectations of the viewers are also very different. I feel like different people when I am doing the two kinds of work. At Vimy I needed to document the site and ensure that the images contained the required ▶



Vimy Ridge — Photographer as a Landscape Architect's eyes. Photographs by Blair Ketcheson.

information. Without having the client there I had to imagine how they would want it presented and try to capture the views and details that we had discussed. In addition, I had to bring my own visual sense to the project to see “through the lens”, as imagery goes through different alterations when filtered through a camera. But here, in this place, I knew that I would want to, and probably have to, address the impulse to engage with the artistic aesthetic while photographing.

I arrived back at the Vimy site early in the morning, well before dawn. Lack of sleep and a strong sense of anticipation drew me to arrive well before what we call “the magic hour”, the first light of day. I wanted to be in a certain spot — the same one where I had my first glimpse of the monument — when the morning light appeared. It was cold and dark. As I stood

there trying to make out any shapes that I could on the horizon to orient myself, I suddenly became conscious of the stillness and loneliness that the soldiers must have felt a hundredfold as they waited for their tasks to begin. The sky was clear and when the light arrived I began to make photographs and went back to wandering and seeing and experiencing the place. I felt privileged to be there and proud to be Canadian, and also proud to be connected in a small way to the history of the place and the monument. ►

And so at Vimy, I photographed the site and the landscape as a commercial photographer and also as an artist. I didn't feel I could do anything else, and hoped that PFS Studio would find the images useful to their enterprise. I also hoped that I would come away with some personal work that had meaning in some different senses. Meaning

in art is elusive and probably rare. It is also up to the viewer to find. I don't try to impose it or define it artificially. What I endeavour to do is to see somewhat differently than others might and to present that—to make the effort to explore visually and discover and capture in my own style. I come from a traditional craft-based background and sometimes feel lost and confused in the current proliferation of images and styles of photography. But photography is much more than just pointing a camera. It is immersive, and to do well, hard work. It can also be joyful and personally rewarding. Visiting and photographing Vimy was one of those opportunities for me **SL**

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Exploring the Visual Experience

By Dennis Robert Evans



My painting comes from a modernist aesthetic, and I feel a kinship to artists, such as, Matisse, Morris Louis, Jack Bush, and Bill Pehudoff. Central to my painting practice is the visual experience. It is upon the visual experience, as a painter, that I have engaged in a personal dialogue.

My experiences of the world, especially the visual experiences, provide me with inspiration for painting. I have long been fascinated by nature's display of colour, shape, and texture, and the transitions from sky to water to land. My fascination focuses on the effects of light on these three elements in nature and how they work together through a display of colour that is in constant flux. The shift of colours from the sky to water to land is at times sharp or abrupt and at other times is fluid and soft with a lingering of the traces of change.

As part of my practice I frequently paint small watercolours from nature as a way of interacting with what I see. These small watercolours generate ideas for my studio practice, where I work with acrylic on both paper and canvas exploring the ideas that caught my eye. The paintings chosen for this article are from a series being painted for the Blenkinsop Valley Project, where artists have been connected with

Dennis Evans, *Farm Site*, 2013, Watercolour, 6" x 4 5/8".



Left:
Dennis Evans,
*Colour Stepping
Stones 2*, 2014,
Acrylic on paper,
20" x 20".

Right:
Dennis Evans,
*Colour Stepping
Stones 3*, 2014,
Acrylic on paper,
22" x 22".

farmers to paint from their land. The watercolour, *Farm Site*, painted on the Mann Farm generated the idea for the paintings included in this issue of *SITELINES*. I was fascinated with the experience of looking through the opening of a stand of trees and seeing this compressed vista of ponds, crops, bushes, and sky forming a kind of visual stepping stone path. The studio paintings are non-objective and there is no attempt to create a scene or sense of place in the painting. The experience taken from *Farm Site* provided the inspiration and the compositional structure for exploring colour relationships, shapes, textures, and qualities of the acrylic medium.

The visual experience from the beginning of my interest in painting has been paramount in my painting practice. This practice of painting has built on my ability to articulate with paint colour on a surface by exploring the full range of possibilities of the acrylic medium. I have explored the qualities in acrylic paint on both paper and canvas surfaces that

provide a directness of application. I am looking for the spontaneity of the brush stroke; for a way to build colours through transparent layers, for a way to move from one colour to another that is fluid, soft, and gentle; for a way to leave evidence of the painting process; and for a way to allow colour to emerge as an entity.

I feel fortunate as I developed as a painter to have been embraced by the rich tradition of painting. Growing up and studying in Saskatoon, SK provided a unique opportunity as a young painter, to be given encouragement, and to be supported by a strong group of local senior artists who had gained national and international recognition for their work: Bill Perehudoff, Dorothy Knowles, and Otto Rogers. The Emma Lake Artists' Workshop which I first attended in 1979 had a profound influence on my development as a painter. The workshops brought national and international artists together for two weeks to work side-by-side painting, sculpting, writing, and talking about our artistic practice.

Through the workshops I felt part of a larger community that connected me to artists across Canada as well as London, New York, Boston, Chicago, and other worldly places. **SL**

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Landscape: **Origins & Possibilities**

By Agnes Ruest. Image continued from page 8.
Agnes Ruest, *Ripening Wheat*, Watercolour , 22"x30".



Landscape: **Origins & Possibilities**

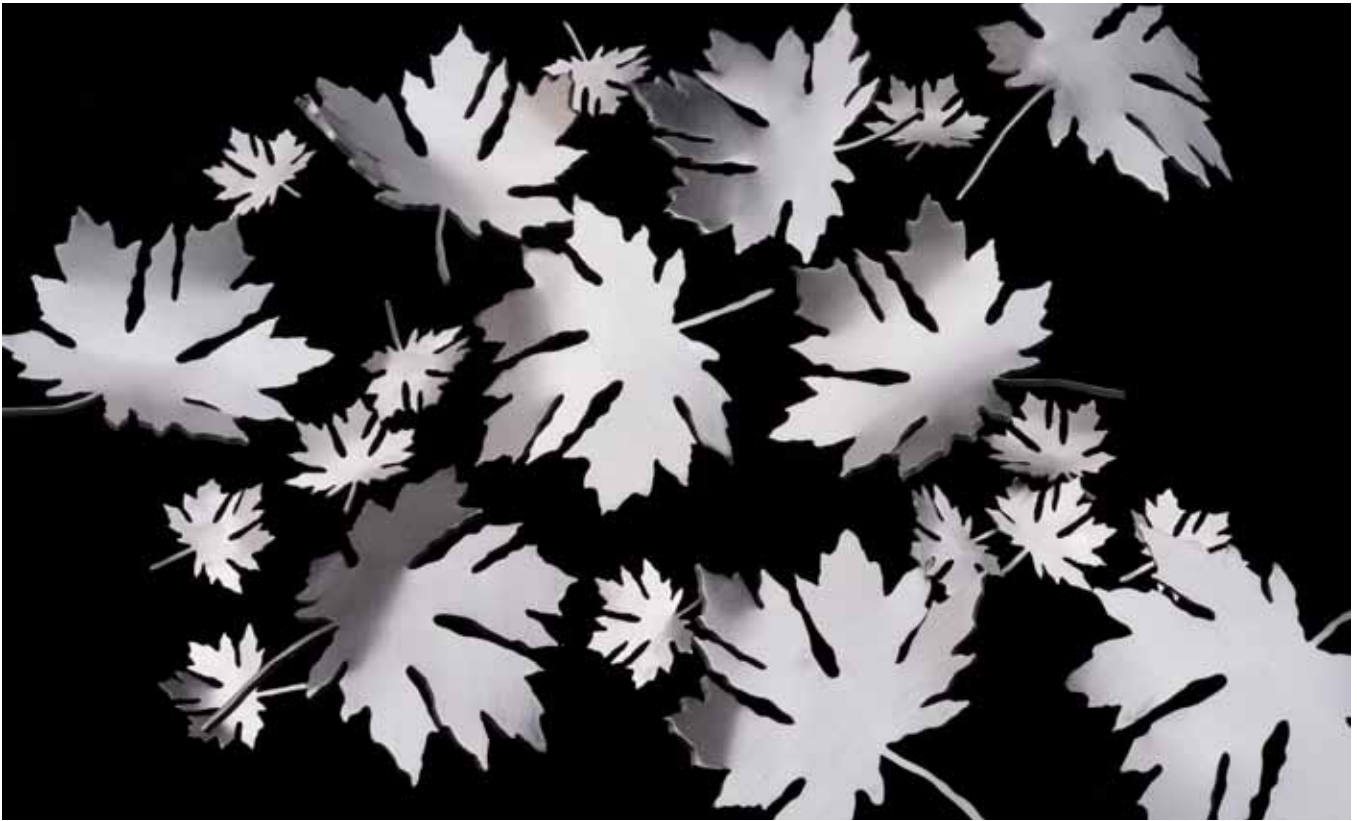
By Agnes Ruest. Image continued from page 8.
Agnes Ruest, *Mann's Meadow*, Watercolour, 11"x15".



VIMY Ridge

By Blair Ketcheson. Image continued from page 10.
Blair Ketcheson, *Photographer as a Landscape Architect's eyes.*





Illarion Gallant, *Acer macrophyllum Pursh*, 2014, Stainless Steel



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