

LandEscape meets

Eric Hotz

I grew up next to forests and streams and went to various camping trips as a child across British Columbia and Alberta, Canada. As I put myself through art school, I found myself working in mountainous regions filled with forests, lakes, streams, and rivers. I haven't been far from nature in my life. This has greatly influenced my life and my artwork. I now live in an area of British Columbia that is minutes away from the natural wilderness. Recently, my vision has been centering upon the beauty of nature that is found within two hours from where I live, which includes alpine mountain valleys, seacoast beaches, or forests and lakes. I live in one of the most beautiful regions of the world and it continues to inspire my artwork.

Eric Hotz

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator
landescape@europe.com

Hello Eric and welcome to *LandEscape*. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit <https://www.eric-hotz-portfolio.com> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production, and we would start this interview with a couple of questions about your multifaceted background. You have a solid formal training, and you studied at the Langara College and at the Capilano University: how did those formative years influence your evolution as an artist? Moreover, how does your cultural substratum due to your work as a

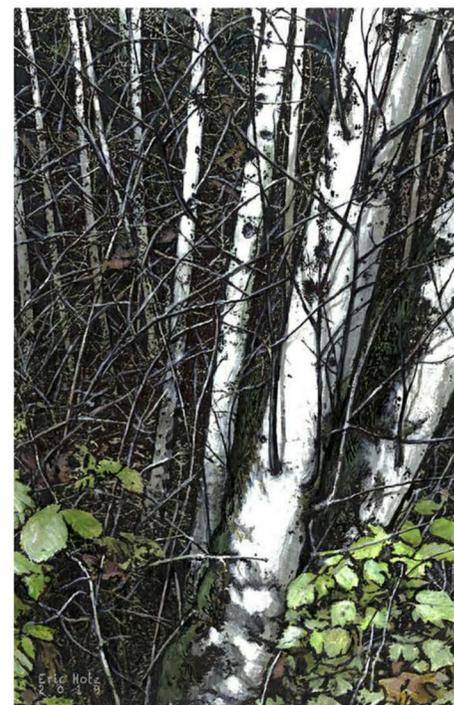
designer and an illustrator direct the trajectory of your current artistic research?

Eric Hotz: Both of the art programs I attended offered respected art programs. Langara College offered a Fine Art program designed to break young students from creating tight technical art by encouraging them to create free-flowing abstract art. I was a technical artist so there were clashes but I conformed to the principles offered and I graduated. Capilano University offered a much wider art perspective, embracing all art styles. Two of Canada's top watercolour painters taught here so I was taught by some of the best. Capilano University's Illustration & Design Program encourages its students to experiment and embrace all forms of art using many of the art masters from the past as examples. Their





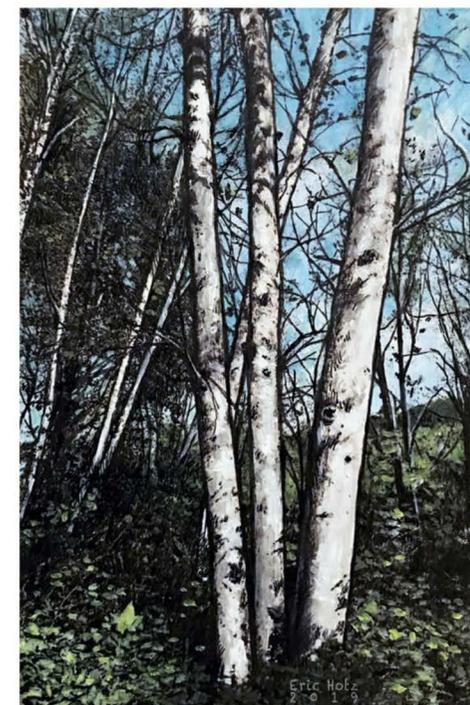
Beaver Pond, 18x24 inch

ERIC HOTZ
2021

Hayward Lake Railway Trail No.7

teachers liked that I worked in a technical art style and encouraged me to pursue my course. I learned a lot about art and myself by attending both art institutes but Capilano's Illustration and Design was a much better fit for how I intuitively painted and drew.

Having worked as a designer and as an illustrator, my art style has evolved to become more structured and planned out. I find myself thinking more about the design of a painting I am about to create. The actual painting part is secondary. I wouldn't be able to create the art I



Hayward Lake Railway Trail No.1

do today without first having had the art background I have had. In many ways, I discarded much of my formal training and went with what I liked to see and paint but much of that was influenced by my art teachers. It is difficult to discern just where a technique originated. I sometimes go back over a painting I created and ask myself, "When did I start working from light washes of dark paint to ever heavier coating of light coloured layers?" This was a deliberate choice. It was April 1984 when I was commissioned to work on a book cover for a



Stand Of Trees No2, 10x13 inch

local publisher. It was then I realized that much of what I know as an artist are hundreds of techniques that I have experimented with over the years that worked so I continue using them. It shows me the importance of working at your craft and painting as much as you can throughout the year because every day you paint is a potentially new learning experience.

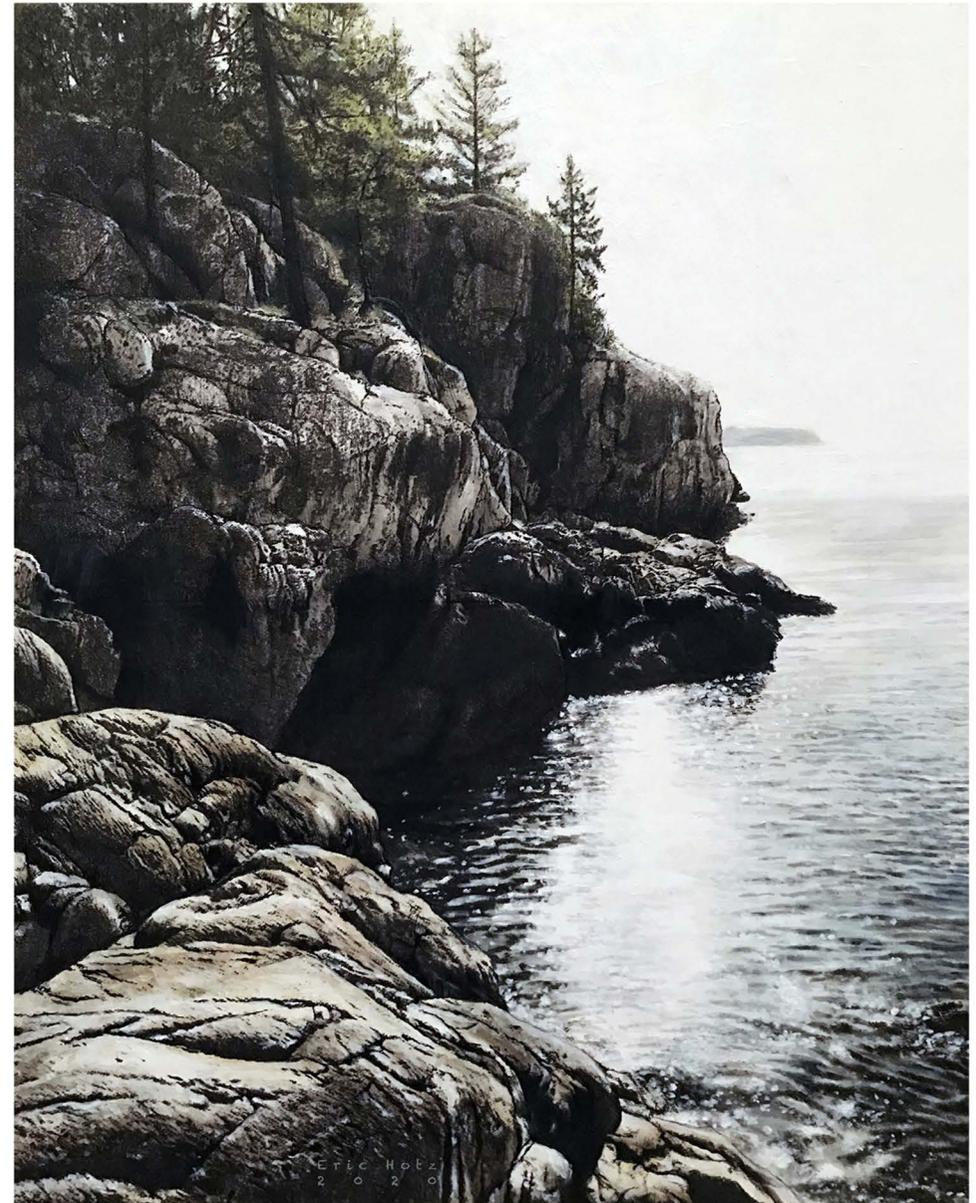
The body of works that we have selected for this special edition of *LandEscape* —and that our readers have already had the chance to get to know in the introductory pages of this article — has at once captured our attention for the way it captures the beauty of the natural wilderness



Stand Of Trees No2, 10x13 inch

of the landscape of British Columbia, highlighting the sense of connection with nature with such unique aesthetic quality: when walking our readers through the genesis of this stimulating project, would you tell us something about your usual setup and process?

Eric Hotz: I usually work on hot press watercolour paper or illustration board. I prefer these surfaces to canvas because they are very smooth although I will also work on canvas. With regards to watercolour paper, I hand stretch my paper, which can roughen the surface slightly but it is still very smooth to the touch. Illustration board has a smoother surface, is



Lighthouse Park, 11x14 inch



Queen Elizabeth Park, 11x14 inch

quicker and easier to use than watercolour paper, which is why I prefer it, but matting and framing can pose a bit of a problem.

I start a painting with a fairly detailed drawing using a soft pencil or black waterproof felt tip pen. Then I cover most of the art surface with washes of acrylic paint. It always feels like I need to have a large portion of the painting covered in a base layer of washes. This was how I was taught to paint while in high school and it became a habit but I later discovered that many artists do not do this. This may appear that I am painting a watercolour painting but I work from dark to light, which is the opposite of a watercolour painting. Once I have the majority of the surface roughly painted, which can take a few hours, I go in and start painting in some details in specific spots. Because I am using dark, thin washes of paint, these layers dry quickly. I can then start adding black ink to help map out the detail better. At any time, I will start smudging the pen lines to create tonal values. Much of this is done quickly. Then I will go back and work over the inked areas with more paint washes and then go back and add more ink. It is this dance between paint and ink that I use to create shades textures and the shape of objects. In most cases, I will eventually cover up pen lines so they disappear from view depending on what effect I am trying to achieve. Each painting is different. I often use pen lines as a guide and painting up to them to achieve very sharp defined edges. It is a method I have used over the years. It is a bit time-consuming but I like the results. This is how I will paint the entire painting. As I progress, my painting style will change to a more opaque technique, which is reminiscent of impressionism. I have noted this happening in other artist's work so it is a shared acknowledgment of achieving a similar

feel or look among artists. I will often rework areas up to three times or more. That means I can, and often do paint an entire painting three times with additional washes of paint and ink, usually applying heavier layers of paint each consecutive time.

The subjects I like to paint often have dark shadows and bright highlights. Contrasting light and textures attract me to a scene and often it will also exhibit reflection. Much of British Columbia has streams and lakes, which reflect light and shadows. The dark recesses of a forest are often where animals hide. I want to capture that feel of dampness, which is often found in the coastal regions of where I live. I seek to paint what I felt at that location. Each location is different. Each location painting tells a story, has a different texture, air, etc.

When painting, I rarely will use more than five colours and these are Cadmium Yellow, Cadmium Red, Phthalo Blue, Titanium White, and Carbon Black. I was taught in art school to mix the colours I need rather than relying upon tubes of coloured paint and this over time became a habit. I prefer to mix colours on the fly because it is quicker than fumbling around looking a specific tube of colour hiding somewhere in my art box.

Your works seem to be laboriously structured to pursue such effective and at the same time thoughtful visual impact, as in the stunning Wild Pink Rose: do you create your works intuitively, instinctively? Or do you methodically transpose geometric schemes?

Eric Hotz: Much of my work comes from learned intuition. I have been painting full time for over 30 years and much of this time was spent experimenting with various art styles and techniques. My sense of design improved



Yellow Rose, 8w x 11h inches

Fall Leaves, 12x16 inches

a lot from my art school years. I developed an eye, an instinct, to see a scene in nature and recognize that it has potential as a painting. The Wild Pink Rose painting is one such example. What drew me to paint this piece was the rose, its delicate petals, its leaves, and the branch with its thorns and textures. I saw layers of mixed textures, which I knew would be a challenge to paint but I also knew that the end result would be worth it. I also liked the dark recesses in the background and knew this would work nicely to punch out the textures. I enjoyed working on this painting, which led me to render two more rose paintings. The Fire Red Rose painting, which I created right after completing the Wild Pink Rose painting,

was all this again but also offered the potential of reflective light, which I recognized as a construct to create the feel of the main flower glowing. I enjoy creating paintings that function.

Red Path features such sapiently structured combination of intense and at the same time thoughtful nuances of tones: how does your own psychological make-up determine the nuances of tones that you decide to include in your works? in particular, how do you develop your textures in order to achieve such brilliant results?

Eric Hotz: To create the various textures in my paintings, I built up multiple translucent paint layers. In many cases, this will amount to well over eight paint layers, some of which will also be



Eric Hotz
2020

Fire Red Rose, 8x11 inch



Wild Pink Rose, 8x11 inch

Eric Hotz
2020

under layers of ink. I use eight different inking techniques when rendering my paintings but the one technique I use the most is smudging the wet ink before it has a chance to dry. I will often paint over the ink to create the textures that I was to show through the paint. I want to feel the ground, its dryness, the dust, and I imagine this texture while I paint. I feel the ground when I was at the location so I could keep it in my mind while I rendered this painting. Sometimes the roughness of the paper surface is used to help convey a texture. If I purposely overwork watercolour paper it will create a roughened work surface that helps convey the texture I am aiming to create. This was a technique one of my watercolour teachers taught me in art school. Using a water-based acrylic paint is not that different from using watercolours but the acrylic medium holds the roughness of the paper more permanently.

The one technique I cannot explain occurs occasionally when I paint. I call this painting subconsciously. It is definitely a psychological painting method. I had given myself 10 hours to complete a painting. I started at 5pm and by 11pm I had barely made any headway. I needed to get this painting finished before I went to bed because I had to be at work teaching art the next afternoon. I decided to pull the stops out and just focus all my energy on the painting. I started at it again at 11pm and finished it. I looked up at the clock and saw that it was 5am. I felt like I had been painting for two hours but 6 hours had elapsed. I went to bed without looking at my painting as I was too tired to do more. Upon waking I was greeted with a finished painting that I don't remember painting. I remember small details but the thought process that went into it just wasn't in my head. I painted it with my subconscious. It was as if I had been watching someone else

paint. I didn't think much more of it as I had, at that time in my life, 14 more paintings to create for my upcoming art show in three months. At the art show, this painting was the one that people gravitated toward and commented upon. It still is. I must paint this way more often.

It's important to remark that you often go out to explore the many outlying regional parks within a 2-hour drive from your studio in Maple Ridge: how do you select the specific locations and how do they affect your creative process? In particular, how does your daily life's experience fuel your creative process?

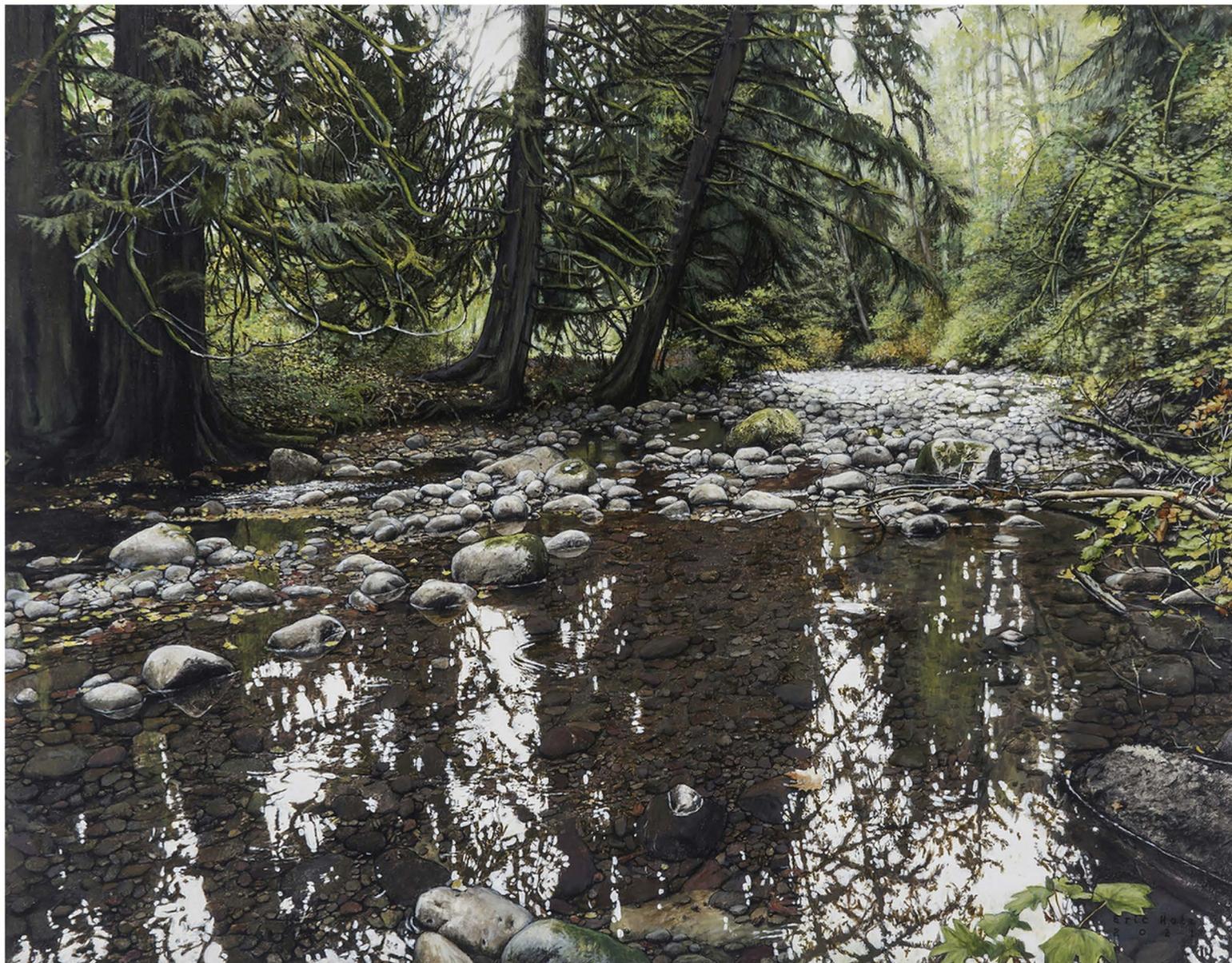
Eric Hotz: I live in an interesting region. Almost everything west and south of where I live is civilization while east it is rural farmland that turns into rugged mountains and valleys. North of me is pure wilderness. Here resides mountains, lakes, streams, bears, cougars, lynx, coyotes, deer, elk, and a host of other animals. Not far away is a glacier with ice caves. Much of what lies north is not accessible along many if any roads. It is a rugged coastal mountain range all the way up to Alaska. As subjects to paint, it is all amazing, plentiful, and offers many different locations. It is also filled with mining and pioneer history, which also intrigues me.

Choosing my painting locations has often just been driving along scenic routes until I see something that catches my eye or I go to a region I once visited as a child. I will Google certain spots that I learned about from speaking with neighbours and friends. In many cases, it involves going into the various provincial parks and just looking over all the sites that are accessible, which may mean a bit of hiking. Much of what attracts me is the sense of isolation of these places and the feel

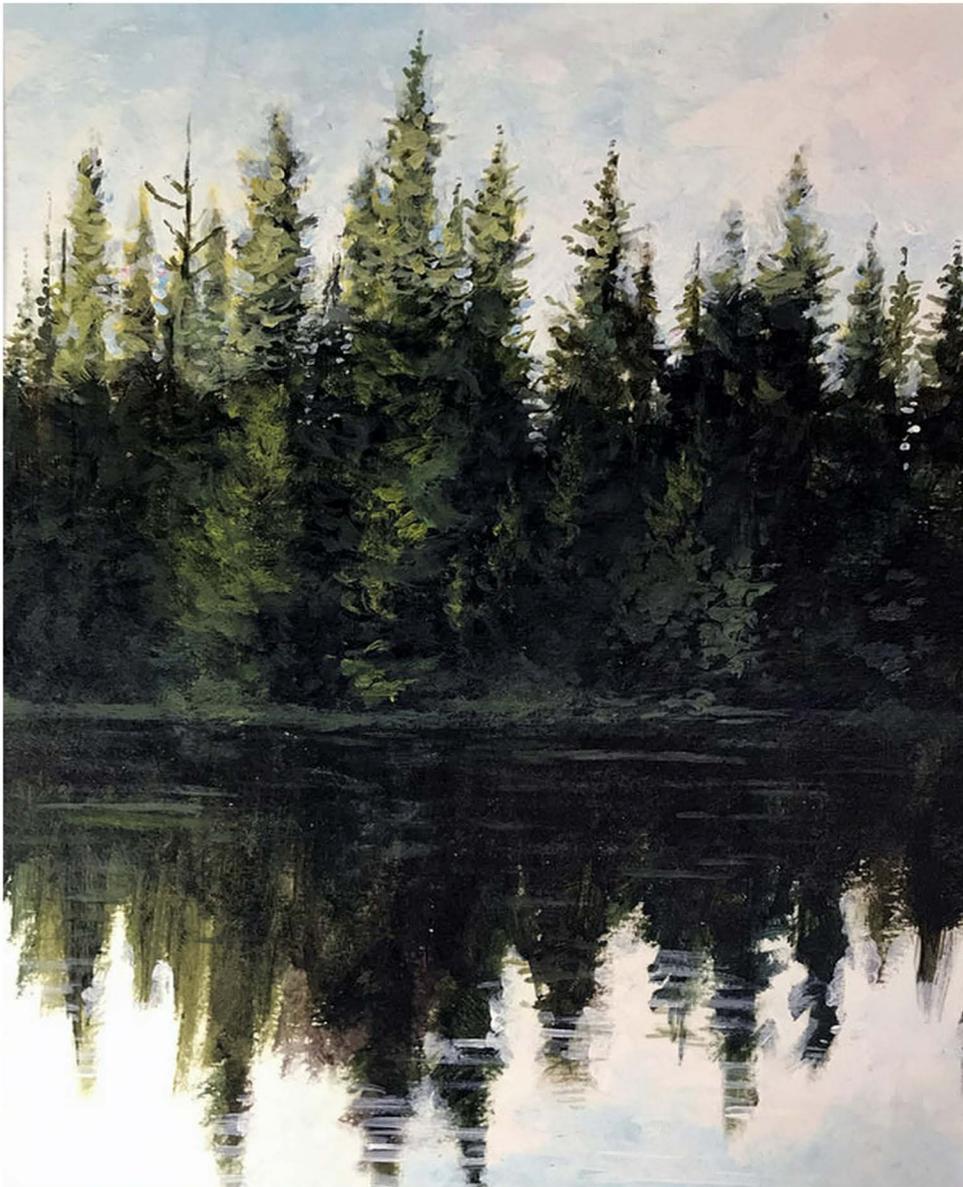
of their ruggedness. Many times I have ventured out to a remote lake along a gravel road to discover that I am alone for the entire day. If it is raining, you will often find yourself alone out there in large valleys surrounded by tall rugged snow capped mountains. These would have, and almost did, make good locations for Lord of the Rings films. I keep thinking about how this land must have been 1000 or more years ago when many of the trees were older than 500 years old before logging. Now, these areas are second and third growth forests. Many of the places I visit were once logging camps, mining settlements, and pioneer homestead locations.

With Kanaka Creek, I am lucky to live close by. I first came to this creek when I was 14 years old. It traverses down a mountain and then meanders through a spot known as Cliff Park, which is across the street from where I live. The creek carved its way through this park over the last 20,000 years or more. It is a picturesque location, perfect for both painting and photography. There are many locations and scenes here to paint. The park has been in existence for many years and feels it. It is a place of beauty that speaks to me with its many ancient, tall cedar trees growing along its course. Most of the time I go here I am alone although more recently I go with my girlfriend. There are the bears and their cubs to think about. In my Kanaka Creek painting, I eliminated the picnic tables and people, which occupied a space in the far back center portion of the grass lawn between two large cedar trees. I will always strive to create the ideal rather than the reality.

Gold Creek is an amazing place to hike. I was attracted by its rugged location and large pools of crystal clear water. When I see a creek or river that is strewn with rocks and boulders, I see it as a very interesting subject to paint. I



Kanaka Creek, 16x24 inch

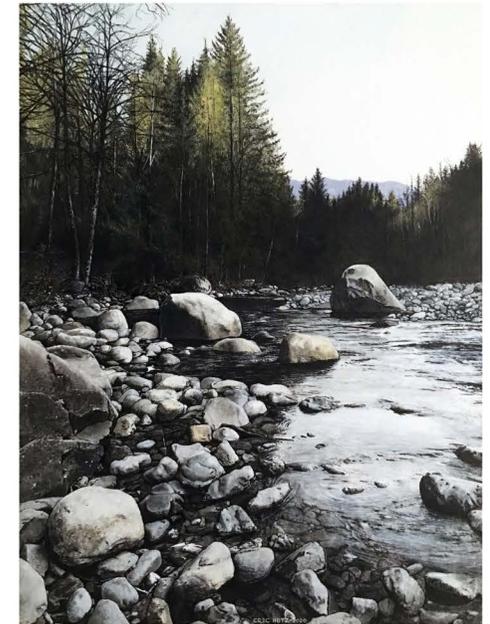


Loon Lake



Fraser River, 18x24 inch

want to include every rock because as a whole, they tell a long story of the waterway's history. I wonder if the same boulders were here 1000 years ago, did they recently tumble from a nearby mountain to their present location, or were they deposited here from a retreating glacier 12,000 or more years ago? The whole province of British Columbia was once covered by more than a mile thick of slowly moving ice until a great thaw occurred. Much of the gravel and large rocks seen in British Columbia valleys and passes are remnants of retreating glaciers. Geologically, British Columbia is very interested and was why there were various gold rushes, as well as silver,



Gold Creek, 12x16 inch

lead, copper, and zinc rushes during its pioneer period.

We definitely love the way your works, and more specifically *Fraser River At Sunset*, feature such stunning combination between reminders to realistic environmental elements and such unique *dreamlike atmosphere*. Scottish artist Peter Doig once remarked that *even the most realistic work of arts are derived more from within the head than from what's out there in front of us*, how do you consider the relationship between reality and imagination, playing within your artistic production?



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Eric Hotz: Reality forms the basis of most of my work while imagination creates the ideal that enhances reality. I guess what I create is more real than real. To paint reality is OK but I will change details, enhance focal points, and fade features that conflict with the design. I will integrate a colour theme throughout my paintings to again enhance my final art. Sometimes I feel that I am creating fantasy but I am creating the perfect scene without taking away the feel of reality of the location. My painting, Fraser River at Sunset, did not require a lot of enhancement to create beautiful results. Summer and Fall sunsets along the Fraser River are often spectacular with their cloud formations coming in from the distant Pacific Ocean and the sun providing spectacular glowing colours throughout any given year. To capture the feel of the trees against the setting sun required a lot of work and patience. I felt painting the many branches essential to capturing the feel of this location and also essential to be loyal to the tree species that grow along the river banks. Anywhere along the Fraser River's 1,375-kilometer course, you will find a multitude of alders and cottonwood trees.

Nature plays an essential role in your artistic production, and we really appreciate the way your works communicate to the viewers sense of peace, inviting them to contemplate upon the idea of nature, in our media driven society. Are you interested in bringing in a new perspective environmental issues? In particular, do you think that artists can raise awareness to an ever growing audience on topical issues that affect our ever changing society?

Eric Hotz: My goal with my artwork is to show local nature to people who may not be aware of just what is literally in their backyards. I

believe in Biophilia, that people, as a whole, naturally tend to seek out nature and animals. I also see this as advertising for my province as it shows the rest of the world just what British Columbia has to offer. We live in an era where much of nature is disappearing, being bulldozed at a whim whenever the need is perceived. Artists can raise environmental awareness and should whenever possible to an ever-growing audience to make them aware of the beauty that exists to help preserve what remains for future generations. The environment must be protected. It is not something that can be replaced easily once it is gone. Artists can change people's perspectives about nature and I feel one of the best methods available to us is to simply show what is at stake. Show the beautiful places in paintings. Hopefully, my paintings will be seen as an attempt to show what needs preserving than as a record of what was lost.

You are an established artist: over the years you have had several art shows, and more recently you have had the solos *An Eye On Nature*, at MAC Art Gallery, Mission, BC, and *A Study of Nature*, at Pitt Meadows Art Gallery, Pitt Meadows, BC: how do you consider the nature of your relationship with your audience? By the way, as the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms — as *Instagram* (https://www.instagram.com/eric_hotz_artist) — increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalized audience?

Eric Hotz: I was amazed at just how many of my relatives traveled from Europe just to see our forests, lakes, natural hot springs, glaciers, alpines, and mountains. I also



Blue Mountain Railway Trail, 11x14inch



The Three Sisters (Rolley Lake)



Portage park

acrylic paint on canvas, 16x20 inches

worked with people who came from Europe and, like my relatives, they explained to me just how lucky I was for being able to live in British Columbia. You can drive for just 2 hours and find yourself alone on a forested snow-capped rugged mountain, far from the nearest paved road or store. Bears, deer, cougars, lynx, and coyotes, to name just a few animals, roam free in my backyard, and yet, I live 40-minutes from a city of 1.5 million people. The scenes change from location to location. This amazed visiting relatives. It seems you can travel from one realm, a city, to being alone in an alpine meadow less than 2 hours later. There is something magical about that.

Having my artwork available on various platforms such as websites, or on Instagram,

allows for viewing from a very large audience worldwide. I don't think I have wrapped my mind around all of the implications of this just yet. However, I am starting to see the implications starting to mount. I keep hearing back from people from various locations on our planet. People do seem to like my art.

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Eric. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Eric Hotz: I just completed another Fall Leaves painting and I am working on another painting of Kanaka Creek. My first Kanaka Creek painting proved to be the most popular piece I have created within the last 10 months. At recent my solo art show, it drew a lot of attention. The painting was sold in July to an American collector/artist. I want to replace it with a similar piece but also a painting that has a slightly different focus. I am always intrigued with subjects that show water depth and reflection as well as demonstrate the temperature of the air and can also convey the sound of slow-moving water. Kanaka Creek offers all this and the water levels are low right now so more rocks and boulders are exposed to the eye. This is a very interesting location to paint that is full of potential. There are a number of similar creeks in streams in my area that I will be visiting over the next while. There are many opportunities to paint from locations that are almost literally in my backyard.

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