

Riding the Elephant (Lake Road) with Sheila Davis



By Sara Gottardi

On the evening of Friday, July 10, the Art Gallery of Bancroft (AGB) had the chance to meet and digest the wonderfully worldly colourful and intimate landscape works of artist Sheila Davis. Oil paintings filled the evening and walls with a sense of being in the wilderness in an eloquent manner as Davis' paintings are focused and based upon profound connections, emotions and a spiritual sense of perceptions of places she has visited. Becoming enamored with certain nooks in places like forests in Canada, Davis loves the rugged and untamed quality they hold for her work as well as for her working environment as a creative person. Having traveled through Europe and despite being taken by its beauty, she still revealed that Canada's beauty is by far the most cherished and favored place to be within and travel for her.

Sharing with other's the beautiful places she sees, places like "Canada's forests, the tangled underbrush and undisturbed," is where she feels most at home and able to interpret what she feels as opposed to what she sees around herself. In her own manner of accumulating information, there is an order in herself to truly absorb what she feels and not only to pay attention to the outer sensations but to the inner as well. Davis enjoys the places "where people have yet to interfere with," she'd stated.

Working from her own photos to kick-off her creative juices flowing, enabling her to pinpoint areas of intrigue and to draw her audience's attention into a more deep and meaningful sense her paintings convey. Transferring an "ordinary scene and cutting into it to find the light and texture I'm looking for," Davis said, is something instinctual, integral and happens often without trying. With a strong grasp of who she is and who she's becoming still both internally and externally coalesces within her works as her paintings bring feelings and emotions through what the earth is telling her, feeding her. Each point of view of every landscape is never to be taken point blank but to be felt and looked at for deeper meanings and correlations to the self and to Mother Earth instead of taking things solely at face value.

"Before I start a piece of work, I ask myself; what is the image saying and what does it want me to say. Every landscape, scene or picture has a voice and it's up to us to translate that," Davis said.

Although primarily self-taught in her craft, Davis still will often paint with friends from The East Central Ontario Art Association as they feed off one another and are good influences equally she says without haste, there is no harsh judgments but optimistic views. Funnily enough, Davis admits that, "I don't think people know that I am as spiritual as I am. It's a strong influence in my work but I can come across as quite cynical," she said.

When Davis was a little girl she'd use to sew but nobody in the family was any sort of enthused by the arts culture severely. This, ultimately led her to discover things more on her own rather than with others or in being shown different artists, art styles and archetypes at a young age. There is only so much schooling and preparation you can take before you need to step into your own and become acquainted with the field you so aspire to be a part of Davis reprimanded and "as my work has developed I've had different influences," people like Kathleen Earthrohl and Turner to name a few are some of Davis' additional influences. Also to be noted are artists such as: Brian Atyeo, Drew Klassen, Blu Smith and Erin Hanson who she absolutely adores and looks to continuously recently becoming more indulgent in the abstract side of art, Davis said.

After every session of working on a painting, Davis mentioned she cleans her palette completely. This is so to start fresh and new for her next sessions. Rich in colours and undefined definition of nature's beauty, Davis said, 'I started in water colour - size was limiting and glass was a barrier. I did acrylic, but it's plastic and feels artificial. Oil has life, it has an essence that lends itself to discovery. It is consistent in its texture and colour,' she also mentioned that she isn't 'a detail oriented person,' stating, 'I see energy and movement in space. Not stagnant details.'

Usually Davis will 'rough in' the image' playing with oil sticks and scribbling loop like figures to loosen and open up her space before giving them real movement when she goes in for a second or third session. The second and third days she'll go in with heavier paints to help define previous light strokes or places of interest. Picking out highlights and areas that catch the eye, like small shocking instances in paintings or pictures that automatically capture the attention of a passerby.

For more information visit Sheila Davis' website at: www.sheiladavis.ca.