

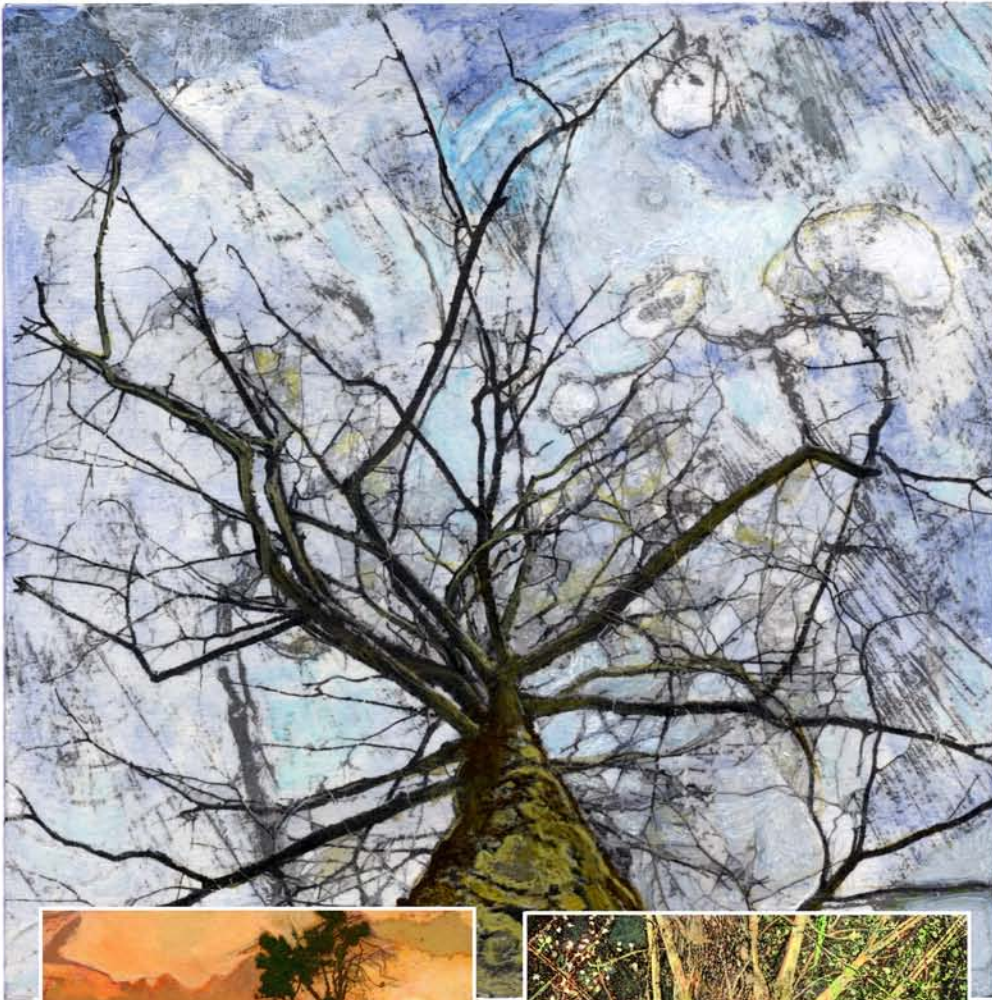
A Conversation with Trees

A Brighton Artist's Intimate Connection with Nature

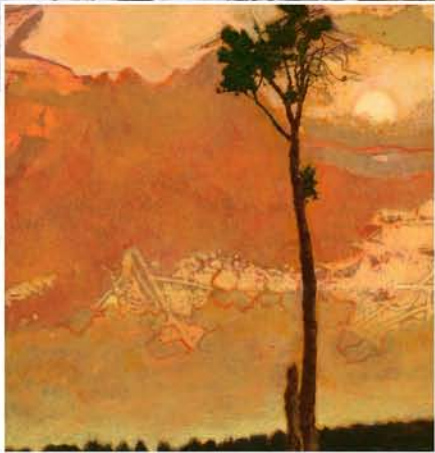
BY SHARON HARRISON

For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone.”—Hermann Hesse 1877-1962 (Wandering).

There are many who have inspired and influenced her along the winding journey of life: among them naturalists, authors, poets, artists, but nothing has had more effect on her soul than nature itself. The story of Josie Radoman began certainly as a child, inheriting her mother’s artistic genes, but the pivotal moment came in her formative years in a land far, far away. In her early twenties, Josie found herself in Florence, Italy where she spent nine extraordinary months as part of her Ontario College of Art final year. The experience would turn out to not only form and challenge her artistic life, but change its forever direction. Italy is where Josie would discover light and its play on colour.



Above: Octopus Tree
 Below Left: Sentinel
 Below Right: Branching Out



For Josie, her teacher and master are the trees surrounding her. She sees the forest as a place of peace and healing; a place to learn about trees and ourselves from the trees.

As a child, she found herself enamored with the expanse of a big blue, cloud-dotted sky, awed by the cows in a field, struck by movement as she watched tall grasses blowing in the wind, taken in by the scent of the air. Seemingly insignificant events

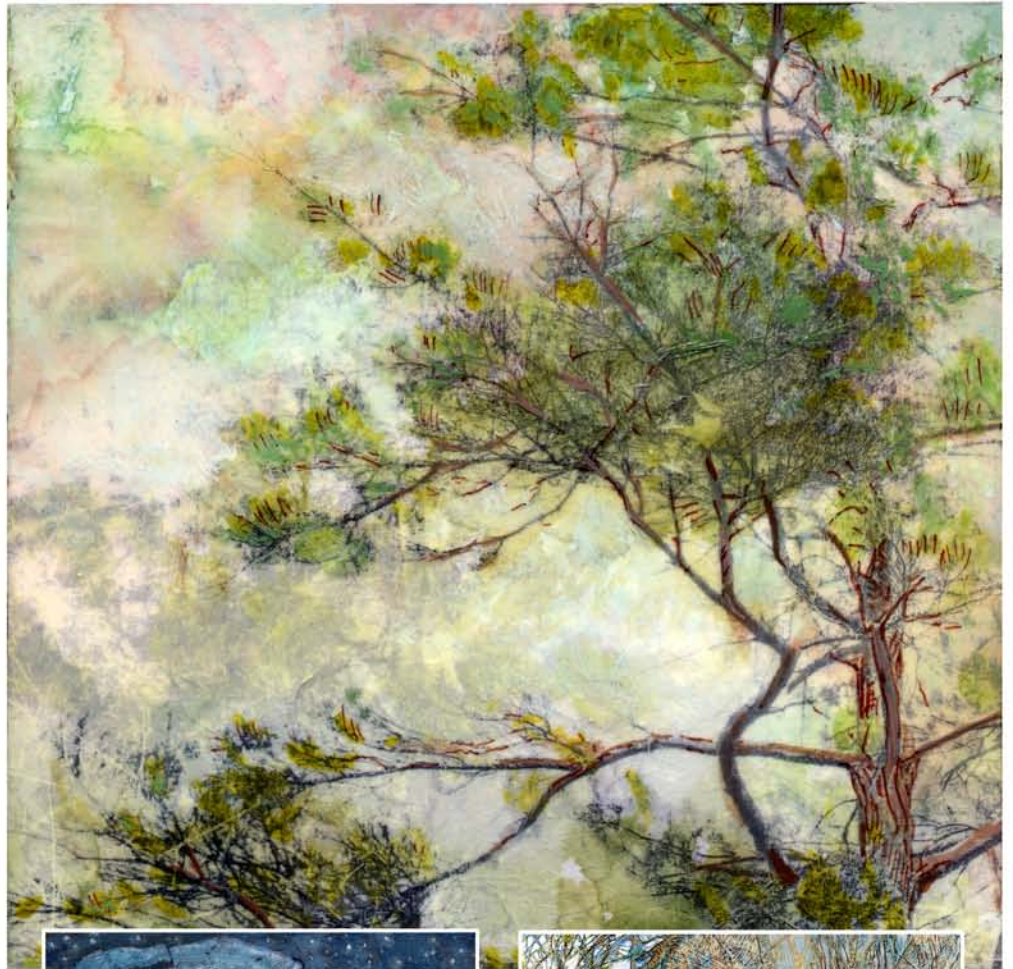
would capture her attention. Josie would draw and paint as a child and knew an artistic life was in her future in some capacity. A city kid with country drives part of her early years, it was her stay in Florence that would change her course as she

was introduced to what was to become her new passion: landscape painting. New to the Brighton area, Josie, an established artist, has a meaningful connection and appreciation of the trees she paints. Simply put, trees are her passion. Trees are long lived: reaching 50, 80 or 150 years and some species as many as several centuries, trees often outlive people. Josie has consciously spent much of her adult life observing trees, wandering woodland trails thinking about the great towering species and their place in our world. She has learned a lot about trees over the years; their resilience and adaptability, their extraordinary capacity for tolerance of the elements (and humankind), how they function and their purpose on the planet. Josie refers to herself as a “painter of trees, lover of nature”, but a rarely used word from the early-1800s used to describe someone fond of the forest, seems a good fit for this artist-cum-tree lover-cum-photographer-cum-creator: nemophilist is the name given to a person who loves trees and woodland scenery; a frequent visitor or “haunter” of the woods, usually with an artistic appreciation of one’s surroundings.

“Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach, undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life.”—Hermann Hesse 1877-1962 (Wandering).

Josie describes her artwork as a process; a sequence of steps, an interaction; a dialogue if you will. It begins with several layers of photographic images which are manipulated using photo editing software, where the image is changed, partly erased, altered in some way. Once it is printed, an acrylic gel medium is applied to the image as well as to a canvas or wood panel—upon an existing painting—where the image is then placed faced down. After a time, the paper is gently removed, the gel medium having bonded the image to the canvas thus creating a new image. It is a random act just as much as it is an artistic

Above: Grace
 Below Left: Infinity
 Below Right: The Dance



one; the resulting image always unexpected. Josie describes the organic process as a dialogue, as layers of paint—or marker pen or pastels—and the images interact; where the initial image is altered creating a new image, textures, and colours. The process is the coming together of many things and many steps; a confluence and merging of artistic materials and artist's hand, the dialogue also a parable.

Her latest show, a solo exhibition entitled "A Conversation with Trees" consists of approximately 70 paintings; the majority of which are eight by eight inch panels with some being combined to produce larger works, as well as a few larger singular pieces. Each image individually created, but together they tell a story: a dialogue. As a new member of the Colborne Art Gallery, a non-profit co-operative celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, she invites all to drop by the Gallery this summer to view the diverse and eclectic selection of artwork on show, from ceramics to jewellery to fibre arts and more. As well, and in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, visitors to the Gallery during her exhibition will have a special opportunity to own a painting of their favourite Canadian tree.

For Josie, her teacher and master are the trees surrounding her. She sees the forest as a place of peace and healing; a place to learn about trees and ourselves from the trees. She considers them model citizens, and feels if we simply spend a little time in their presence and among nature, we may all become better citizens. Josie believes trees teach us to respect nature and to have more respect for each other, thereby improving the world in which we live. To experience your own personal conversation with trees, drop by Josie Radoman's exhibition in August and September. Then go hug a tree. Josie will thank you.

"So the tree rustles in the evening, when we stand uneasy before our own childish thoughts: Trees have long thoughts, long-breathing and restful, just as they have longer lives than ours."—Hermann Hesse 1877-1962 (Wandering).

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