

GABRYEL HARRISON

ARTIST STATEMENT / BIO

Gabryel Harrison was born in New Zealand. The artist now lives and works in Vancouver, B.C. She completed a Fine Arts Degree at the University of Ottawa in 1980, later fulfilling post-graduate requirements to become an art therapist in 1992. Working as an art therapist until 1996, and thereafter in the creative arts field, Harrison has devoted herself to paint full time since 1999.

"I am presently cultivating a garden of grasses and of flowers on the bank of the Fraser River. The composition of my life holds greater unity in this proximity to nature, and in particular, water. Water holds power for me. I choose to live at the edge of the tide. I am part of a place where the river meets the sea, a place of fluid boundaries, currents merging both salt and fresh. I am part of a fugitive space where the moon is midwife to a transitory shore. At this confluence of energies, I am reminded that the line of earth and water is as elusive as memory, as intangible and mysterious as the human journey itself. It is here, through the cultivation of my creativity, that I make effort to be part of the flow of creation, to reveal the truth of my own inner nature. My paintings are evocations of states of mind and the constant transformations in the sea of the senses, the ever-changing landscape of the emotions and the mutable mind reflected in the surrounding natural world. We see not only with our eyes, but with our mind and our heart. I feel a certain devotion to seeing. I want to see the truth of my own life, to know more deeply my response to the world and of my place in this vast unknowing. It is the process of life I am most interested in not the process of painting."

Gabryel is an artist inspired by the common roots of painting and poetry, the rhythmic gesture from heart to line, the inspiration of image, metaphor and symbol. She seeks to honour not to unravel the connection between the outer surface of the world and the inner realm of spirit. Gabryel looks to nature and botanical forms as well as to the historical tradition of vanitas paintings for her motifs and compositions. Her expressions are less about representation than illuminations of inner states of consciousness.

Working in translucent layers of oil paint, Gabryel sometimes incorporates crushed rose petals or other organic or inorganic matter that becomes a physical carrier of meaning and memory. Gold leaf is occasionally used in symbolic reference to the transmutation of human consciousness - the objective of spiritual alchemy. The artist also explores text, including the physical meditation of inscribing words, phrases and marks into the surface of her paintings. The gesture reinforces her philosophy that words, and the imaginative impulse behind them, have the power to transform reality. The physical acts of painting and of writing is the artist's self-abandonment to the challenge of life's ambiguities, her pleasures, her melancholy, her tenderness, and her joys.