



Wilderness
Brian Holden
January 13 – March 4, 2012

Artist Talk: Friday January 13 at 7:30 pm
Artist workshop: Sunday January 22, 10- 4:30 pm.

A walk through *Wilderness*
By Nadia Kurd

This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore... As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirtsleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all of the elements are unusually congenial to me... Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled... Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete.

- Excerpt from *Walden* (1854) by Henry David Thoreau.

In his meditative and complex book *Walden or Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau, contemplates, among many other things, the richness of the natural world. Throughout the book, Thoreau writes intimately on the flora and fauna of the Walden Woods, but more importantly, emphasizes the importance for humankind to maintain ties to this ecologically intricate world.

Given the descriptive poignancy of Thoreau's words, it is no surprise then to see a keen resonance with the work of printmaker Brian Holden. Both writer and artist share a commitment to nature. In his exhibition *Wilderness*, Holden utilizes a range of printmaking techniques, from linocuts to dry point etchings, to depict and contemplate the natural landscape around the north shore of Lake Superior. From studies of lichen to scenes with a thicket of trees, these images remind us of the delicate balance in which the natural world exists and the refined beauty of its character.

For much like Thoreau in Walden Pond, Holden expresses a deep and prolonged preoccupation with the living in harmony with the environment. As Holden writes, "I have chosen to illustrate the interconnectedness that exists between the landscape, organic living things and the elements" and acknowledges that "I am a guest when in the wilderness and it has never been my intention to disturb that delicate balance established by nature but to relay my observations and experiences through my artwork." Moreover, this respect for the environment is also reiterated in the material choices Holden makes. Most of the materials that he uses are non-toxic, and include vegetable oil-based inks and polymer plates that are UV light reactive in lieu of caustic chemicals like nitric acid solution.

With over thirty years as an artist, Holden's lengthy engagement with the study of the diverse landscape of Northwestern Ontario has been the strength of his artistic practice. Never one to shy away from experimenting and expanding the traditions of printmaking, Brian Holden walks us through the wilderness of northern Ontario and shows us the changeable seasons of the land.

Artist Statement

My perception of the physical world and emotional response to it is the basis of my art, interpreted through drawing, painting, carving & printing onto paper. Employing careful observation, I explore the delicate interplay between structure, form, colour, shadow and light.

Landscape and the natural world are the prominent influences in my work. Spending time in northern wilderness areas throughout my life has established a strong personal relationship to the land. The region where I live harbours an amazing biodiversity found in the wilderness. I've chosen to illustrate the interconnectedness that exists between the landscape, living things and the elements. These studies might serve as an archive as forces of change proceed to alter these habitats and ecosystems.

Source material is acquired from my photographs and sketches. This is then translated via a variety of printmaking methods. A fair amount of time is spent developing the image and no matter what method is employed, each presents a set of challenges that force me to think and learn from, to expand my levels of skill with that medium. I use various printmaking techniques that include serigraphy, relief block, photopolymer and acrylic plate intaglio, and collagraph. I also implement traditional hand printing methods with more current non-toxic materials in the studio.

My belief is that I am a guest in the wilderness and it has never been my intention to disturb that delicate balance established by nature, but to relay my observations and experiences through my artwork.

Biography

Brian Holden is a Thunder Bay based artist and arts educator. His work is highly influenced by his surroundings and is reflected in studies of the landscape and flora/fauna of this region.

He was born in Northwestern Ontario and during his youth had the opportunity to live around the province in a variety of small communities that bordered on wilderness (boreal forests of Northern Ontario) and less populated rural regions of southern Ontario. Many hours were spent during his childhood and teen years exploring the woods and fields which forged a deep respect for and love of nature. This has continued to be the source of inspiration for the imagery he creates. Brian studied the basics of visual art for a year at Sheridan College in Brampton Ontario. After this he then made the decision to undertake an independent direction with his creativity. He took the basics of visual arts fundamentals and through self teaching expanded his skill and understanding of a range of various mediums.

Brian is also an active arts educator and has been funded by provincial and regional Community Arts and Heritage programming and also through the Ontario Arts Council Artist in Education program. He enjoys passing along the knowledge and traditions of printmaking to both youth and adult students alike.

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