

Nature Nurture

Marion Webber ~ Artist Biography

“My art is a visceral connection to nature – balancing exploratory freedom with a reverence for craftsmanship.”



Some artists find their need to create late in life. Others know much earlier. They trust their primordial instincts...they just know. For Marion Webber, she always knew she was an artist. She just didn't know how or why it was the right state of “being.”

So where did this early creative impulse come from? Some came from divine gifting through her mother, an accomplished painter. Webber, born in Oakville, Ontario, Canada, 1953, was at a young age privy to her mother's painting style. Her mother was very influenced by the Group of Seven, Tom Thompson in particular. Thompson was a personal friend of the family.

Webber's grandmother was an avid art collector, buying well known Canadian and



Avenue Walk I, oil on canvas, 36" x 36".

European artists including Turner and Rembrandt. Webber's mother was eventually bequeathed some of these paintings including Canadian artists, Cornelius Krieghoff, and Paul Peel. One painting especially captivated Webber; it was the Lady in the Satin Dress by Peel. The rich ambiance of the interior, the shimmering satin of the dress and the elegant pose of the lady was a source of mystery and amazement for Webber. Right then, she knew if she were to paint, she would have to always do

her very best. Certainly, Mr. Peel believed in this value. This theme carries throughout her work today, the need to do her best, regardless of style or current thematic interest.

Webber's artistic influences are quite broad. One reason is her great respect for the Masters, alive or deceased. The other is in her innate curiosity to be open and learn. This comes from researching centuries of art and many sojourns into nature. “Nature compels one

to notice, and I like to notice less impressive visions that most others would pass by”, she comments. “Nature is the source of all life and art.”

At the University of Victoria, Webber studied (BFA, 1971-75) drawing, color, value and conceptual thinking. She also embraced black and white photography. This gestation period allowed her to understand the differing approaches to creative genesis between painting and photography. Webber notes, “photography captures and edits an image to communicate a story, but painting selects and combines elements to build the story.”

This unique combination pervades her work. She begins with images augmented by words and phrases, then does concept sketches, studies and finally the completed work. The gestation period for paintings, especially a series, can be long, from 2 to 10 years.

Webber believes that it is easy to paint, but difficult to paint well. That's where years of skill building and practice make the difference. If it looks easy, it may have taken years to become so.

While at university, Webber was nurtured by her favorite instructor, John Dobereiner. He was an abstract painter and guided her through her insecurities as a burgeoning artist. "One very important thing he taught me is – the sign of a great painting is that it is filled with many other little great paintings." She continues to use this concept in her work, attracting the viewer first with an overall impactful impression, then moving into studying the details and subtleties of the paint. Even in realism, the paint treatment can become very abstract.

After university Webber worked in a photography store (Victoria, BC) and a magazine/newspaper publisher (1976-77, in Yellowknife, NWT). She moved down to Edmonton, Alta. and worked in the publishing industry for a few years. She went back to school, this time acquiring a degree in graphics and advertising from Grant MacEwan Community College, 1979. This deepened her design acumen greatly.

In 1982 she made the first of several trips to Europe. For 10 months she visited over 50 galleries and museums. Some left an indelible impression on her. "I fondly remember going to the

British Museum (numerous times), Tate Museum, Prado and the Louvre as if it was yesterday," she reflects. "The first time I saw one of Rembrandt's self portraits, I was stunned. It was captivating. I could feel what he was feeling as an aging man. And Turner, wow! His later painting style was a hundred years ahead of his contem-



poraries. His work was so abstract and painterly. Its no wonder the 19th-20th century artist Claude Monet was so influenced by Turner and started the Impressionist movement in France."

Arriving in Vancouver in 1983, Webber worked freelance in the graphics industry and soon opened her own business. After 25 years as a designer, then 10 years as a marketing management consultant, she went back to her first love... painting.

Since 1998, she has been creating many works in oil pastel, graphite, mix media and oils. She currently teaches fine and applied art students part time, gives workshops and still does some marketing consulting.



Waiting for You I, oil on canvas, 36" x 18".



Yellow Interlude I, oil on canvas, 30" x 40".

Her art began as quite realistic, yet always utilizing strong design and painterly elements from abstract art and her design career. She pays homage to a range of great deceased masters: da Vinci, Rembrandt, Carravaggio, Constable, Monet, Corot, Turner, Gorky, Diebenkorn and Rothko. Living masters she admires include B.C's Gordon Smith and Paul Chizik; and American artists Wolf Kahn, Jeremy Mann, Mark English and Bart Forbes. English and Forbes have had great long careers in illustration.

Webber's new work is of an inner journey, of impressions and feelings in the guise of landscape. The work is more visceral and abstract. Again, these new series take time to gestate, born from years of skill building.

"I cannot give what I do not have, therefore I give what I am, and that's the gift. My hope is to give solace to viewers, a place of rest."

