

Horizon Line

The departure point for this new series of paintings, called *Horizon Line*, was a contemplation on the 150 year history of Canadian Landscape painting. Specifically, on the work of the iconic Group of Seven. Their exalted paintings were my inspiration as a young artist growing up in Toronto. In beginning this project, I was immediately aware of how different the natural environment feels to me now then when I was a young woman growing up in Ontario. And how oddly static the Group of Seven's landscapes feel to me at this time in a natural environment today that seems so full of uncertainty and flux. I started with great efforts to keep the project objective, a series of tidy local landscapes but in the end, what needed to emerge was a personal history of landscape rather than some collective or cultural idea about it. What is my relationship to the landscape? How has my history on the land shaped me and my perception of it? Why is it I choose to live here surrounded by nature?

I set out by going into the local landscape, sketching and taking photographs on various walks around the Kootenay area. Soon, I began to develop a series of landscape paintings and it seemed that the project was moving along nicely. I could identify an interest in working with an ephemeral element that I could see and a sense of drama that I could feel in nature. To this end, I worked with creating transparencies through the overlap of landscape forms in space and placing forms in a non-hierarchical arrangement on the canvas, creating a narrative with multiple perspectives or events that exist within a single space. Clear enough, however, as I sunk deeper into the process of creating landscape paintings I was thrown into a cyclone when aspects of the human and animal body began to appear in one of the paintings. This grabbed my attention with a big YES. Soon, I was volleying between two separate yet related series of paintings - that of the land body and that of the animal body. What remained common to both series was a thin line, a *horizon line* that dissected the pictorial space. This line was serving as a scaffolding for the imagery and provided a piece of ground when I needed one.

In reflecting on the process, I would say that it was through the land that the body emerged and that the thesis of the work shifted in these body - scapes to that of a felt experience rather than a conceptually or even a retinal one. In the end, the imagery still departs from my landscape studies before moving into a place of memory and imagination. A place where the land and the body are one.

Deborah Thompson is a visual artist living in Nelson, B.C. She has a degree in Fine Art from the OCAD, a BA in experiential education from Prescott College and an MFA in Painting from the University of Missoula. She is currently involved in a project which investigates anxiety and its shadow compassion as expressed in our society and through the human body. She is interested in the translation of her two dimensional imagery into three dimensional forms and to this end she is working with a variety of sculptural processes.

