



From Sentience  
To Cognizance

**Heidi Thompson**





# The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

*Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper*

From Sentience  
To Cognizance

## **Heidi Thompson**

Commentary by Julie Oakes

Artist Catalog, Heidi Thompson, From Sentience To Cognizance  
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This catalog was created for the exhibition titled "Abstract (Colour)"  
at Headbones Gallery, The Drawers, Toronto, Canada, October 6 - November 1, 2007

Commentary by Julie Oakes  
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Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Toronto, 2007  
Photos, Layout and Design, Richard Fogarty

Printed on the Ricoh SPC 811DN

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RICH FOG



Micro Publishing  
Toronto Canada

## Heidi Thompson - From Sentience To Cognizance

There is a move from sentience to cognizance that depends on the breadth of the imagination. Heidi Thompson's color field paintings on paper provide springboards to launch flights of fancy that gel into an understanding of the absolute physicality of the particular art object. It seems a weighty description of the link between the perception of one of these pieces and the knowledge that can be gleaned from them, but this *is* how they work.

The immediate impression is a sensate response - to the glory of the color and the texture, the edges of the paper raggedly containing the color field - to the sensation of viewing the art piece. The contemplation of the sensation brings past associations into play - the patinas of old Tuscan walls, astronomical photographs, mineral deposits, the dried up bottom of an evaporated fountain, mold, lichens, a rusty, barnacled prow of a recently retrieved shipwreck - wherever the individual mind has lodged a similar field of color and texture. Then there is the tangential potential derived from the immediate visual and the associations that they *create*; new visions like the figures and worlds that we imagine in the clouds, a bonfire or a peeling patch of debris. The response is individual and Heidi Thompson has granted the room to move in a number of associative directions. The color field becomes a launching pad for the particular experiences, embedded in the viewer's consciousness, to spring into being.

Using the piece as an object for meditation and paring the sensation down to the energy that is flowing into the eyes and being then transmitted to the brain, brings about a distinctly human frame of mind. Because there is no subject other than the materials that make up the phenomenal object that is the piece of art, there is room to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the artwork that is just about as pure as it can get. This pure seeing, because of the human cognizance, causes an emotion - a thrill, perhaps, at the sheer beauty, or maybe dread at the subliminal mystery inherent in being or it could be a pleasurable shock at the glory of perceiving such a vision. This is the strength and appeal of pure abstraction.

Pure abstraction is a physical presence that often catches our attention (the patina, wall or rust, for instance) and yet it doesn't fade into disinterest over time. The wonder continues and the piece pulses a new version of the vision with each encounter. From the softer application of color fields where the glow of color is dependant on layering, the later works on paper have developed a luminosity as roughly textured as the layers of paint that constitutes their physical make up. There is less association in the paintings for the medium is being assertive and allowing little room for fanciful imaginings. Just as a cut glass with the added surfaces enable more refraction and reflection, so Heidi Thompson's work progressively offers more of itself, more of an intense display of its own properties. This firmness of being centers the art work. It exudes a sense of confidence as if it were a direct manifestation of the spirit of creation.

Julie Oakes



Earth Water - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Untitled (White, Blue, Black) - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007



October - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Yellow Painting - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Red Over Blue - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007



Yellow History - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Orange breaking Into Ochre - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007



Yellow Veil - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Yellow Breaking Over Orange - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007



Late Autumn - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007





Untitled (Magenta Blue) - 30 x 22.5 inches - sand, gesso & acrylic on paper - 2007

## **Impermanence and Painting**

Heidi Thompson

“Change or impermanence is the essential characteristic of all phenomenal existence. We cannot say of anything, animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, "this is lasting"; for even while we are saying this, it would be undergoing change. All is fleeting; the beauty of flowers, the bird's melody, the bee's hum, and a sunset's glory.” Nyanaponika Thera

Buddha said, “all is *anicca* all is impermanent”. He taught one to dispassionately observe change, particularly the change within one's own body and mind. He shared his revelation that liberation is found when one becomes free from his or her attachment to that which is impermanent.

For me, the act of painting is a changing phenomenon which provides insight into my intangible, impermanent nature. Painting is a continuous action of cause and effect, transformation, movement and change. The experience likens swimming in life's perpetual stream and becoming one with her current. From the painting's conception to completion, the chain reaction is governed by conscious and unconscious forces. I become an instrument, a medium, a transmitter, a participant of this continuum. From texturing and priming the surface of paper or canvas and applying layers of colour, to drying, cracking, eroding, peeling, and scraping the paint away. Images appear, only to disappear and emerge in an entirely new variation. Every layer of the painting indicates change.

Not only does the painting change, but so do I. My thoughts drift from one to the next provoking countless emotions and sensations to arise and fade. At times, I react with pleasure to a particular combination or quality of colour in the painting. I feel inspired; the image glows, there is a harmonious order, or a tantalizing tactility. Moments later, I apply more paint and the new image evokes discord or indifference. I feel frustrated. While experiencing aesthetic highs and lows there comes a rare moment when the painting's whole composition reverberates with my finer sensibility. I stop painting. In the finished work I perceive something of beauty, although I can't describe why.

Perhaps beauty is not the painting itself but its profound expression of change. A painting may bring into focus and freeze one of life's fleeting, intangible moments for us to behold - a blooming rose, an aging face, a setting sun, a stormy sea, a child's innocent face, a vibrating colour-field. Paul Brunton wrote, “The artist who succeeds is the one who communicates his



sensations of ethereal beauty, his ecstatic exaltations, so that beholders partake, understand or feel the same sensations, too.”

Maybe immortalizing the creative flow of cause and effect into a tangible work is one way I can cling to life's fleeting existence. (Not quite what Buddha had in mind) I do find comfort in art. In particular, I enjoy uplifting images which inspire awe. Also, just as I find comfort gazing at an ancient patina - weathered by external forces I enjoy abstract paintings which appear weathered by internal creative forces.

Mysteriously, my recent paintings byproducts of a creative process - resonate with my soul. Maybe because they present tangible evidence that my mind and body, thoughts and emotions are in perpetual flux. I find solace in this realization despite the paintings' less-than-perfect surfaces and unstable compositions. In some way they express nature's law of impermanence - with her macro and microcosm of moving particles, sub-atomic wavelets, vibrating energy, and materializing and dematerializing solidity. The paintings, with their marred surfaces, fragmented shapes, moving colours, peeling layers, shifting hues, mirror that which I am - *anicca* - a changing phenomenon, a flow of life..

## Heidi Thompson

- 1956** Born in Canada  
**1974-1979** University of Art & Design Zurich, Switzerland  
**1980-1981** Academy of Art Nurnberg, Germany  
**1981-1982** University of Art Budapest, Hungary  
**2001-2002** BC Open University, Canada  
**2002-2003** University of Victoria, Canada  
**1995** Published "Recapitulation" written and illustrated by Canadian/Italian painter, **Sveva Caetani**

### EDUCATION

**1975-1979** Attended the *Vorkurs* at the **Kunstgewerbeschule Zurich** (now the University of Art & Design Zurich) followed by a three-year concentration in photography earning a ***Swiss Fahigkeits Zeugnis*** (Diploma for Photography). Worked on several photography exhibitions including ***Swiss Military Ball, 1978***

**1978** Selected photographer to document the Zurich Chamber Orchestra for a solo exhibition. Traveled for one month with the orchestra. Took photographs of solists including Yehudi Menuhin, Paul Tortelier, Peter-Lucas Graf and Louis Duquenois. The exhibition of 100 images were published into an edition ***Zurich Chamber Orchestra.***

Attended retreats at the **Ramachrishna Vedanta Meditation Center** in Gretz, France.

**1979** Assigned photographer to document Robert Ryman for a week before and during the opening of I.N.K.(International Neue Kunst Gallery) Zurich.

**1979-1980** Apprenticed with German painter, Oskar Koller in Nurnberg, Germany. Worked on several bodies of work including ***Christmas Market Germany***

**1981-1982** Studied painting at the **Akademie fur Bildenden Kunste Nurnberg** (College for Fine Art Nurnberg.) with Professor Ernst Weil. Outside of school, became private student of Klaus Schmidt, former student of Austrian painter, Oskar Kokoschka. Attended a 10-day Buddhist meditation retreat in Austria.

**1982** Attended first year of the five-year master's art program, **Kepzomuvezeti Foiskola** (Hungarian Academy for Fine Art) in Budapest under the instruction of Professor Kokas Ignacs.

**1983** Returned to Vernon and established an art and photography studio. Exhibited paintings and photography in numerous cities in British Columbia and became member of the *Virdian Gallery* in New York.



**1984** Received the **British Columbia Cultural Grant** for preparation, travel and exhibition of a photography project entitled, **Portraits of Artists**.

**1986** Private instruction from illuminist painter, Leszek Forczek. Attended a 10-day **Vipassana** meditation course taught by Mr. SN Goenka, followed by several 10-day courses for the following years.

**1994** Exhibited several photography and painting exhibitions including **Female Nude in Motion**  
**1999.**

**1997** Created and taught a meditation course for children in Vernon and Vancouver schools called ***Advanced Attention Development***. **AAD** was featured in a documentary film for **CBC's *Spilled Milk***. Wrote an article, "Teaching Children Meditation", which was published in the Vancouver magazine *Common Ground*.

**1998** Attended a workshop seminar for script-writing by Micheal Hague, Vancouver. Began writing a dramatic, feature-length screenplay, entitled: **"The Evening Bird"** based on Sveva Caetani's life and art.

**1999** Juried invitation to attend a Praxis Screenwriting Workshop, Vancouver

**1998** Workshop seminar by Robert McKee, author of *STORY* on scriptwriting, Calgary

**2001** Earned a **B.F.A., Open University of British Columbia**.

**2002** Completed the ***Post-Secondary School Internship Program***, **University of Victoria**. Received a **British Columbia Teaching Certificate (BCCT)**.

**2002-2006** Taught art in high schools and developed **ArtQuest** after-school art programs for children. Conducted several workshops for teachers focussing on developing art curriculum in schools.

**2007** Traveled to New York to meet Joseph Mariano, Natvar Bhavsar and Joe Barnes. Attended a lecture given by Donald Kuspit.

## **SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**

1978	Zurich	Witikon Community Centre (solo)
1980	Nurnberg	Kom Youth Centre (solo)
1980	Nurnberg	Galerie der Stadt (group)
1981	Budapest	State University (group)
1983	Vancouver	BC Festival of the Arts (juried/group)
1985	Vernon	Topham Brown Public Art Gallery (solo)
1985	Grand Forks	Grand Forks Public Art Gallery (solo)
1985	Kelowna	Kelowna Public Art Gallery (solo)
1987	Vernon	Topham Brown Public Art Gallery (solo)
1988	Vancouver	Alma Street Caf (group)
1988	Vancouver	Naam Restaurant (solo)
1989	Vancouver	Firehall Arts Theatre (solo)
1989	Vancouver	Robson Square Media Centre (group)
1989	Vancouver	Community Arts Centre/BC Women Artists (solo)
1989	Vancouver	Alma Street Caf (group)
1991	Kelowna	Kelowna City Hall (solo)
1991	Vancouver	BC Festival of the Arts & (juried/group)
1991	Penticton	Front Street Gallery (group)
1992	New York	Viridian Art Gallery (represented)
1992	Kelowna	Dow Reid Art Gallery (represented)
1994	Vancouver	Talking Stick Art Gallery (solo)
1994	Vancouver	Simon Patrich Art Gallery (represented)
1996	Vernon	Headbones Art Gallery (solo)
2000	Vernon	Headbones Art Gallery (group)
2000	Vancouver	Howe Street Art Gallery (represented)
2004	Kelowna	Art Ark (represented)
2004	Vernon	Gallery Odin (represented)
2005	Vernon	Vernon Art Gallery (group)
2006	Toronto	The Drawers - Headbones Art Gallery (group)
2007	Toronto	The Drawers - Headbones Art Gallery (represented)
2007	Berkely	Gallery Sam (represented)

## **SELECTED COLLECTIONS**

2007	Samuel Lallouz Private Collection, Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montreal
2006	Mraz Collection, Toronto
2004	Private collection of Robert Keller, USA
2006	Corporate collection, Benefit Plan Administrators Inc. Mississauga
1999	Private collection of Richard Madlener, USA



## AWARDS & GRANTS

- 2006 Red Ink Works Script Competition. Won 11th place for the screenplay, "The Evening Bird".
- 1996 **VanCity Book of Excellence Award** for *Recapitulation*
- 1984 B.C Cultural Grant

## PUBLICATION & ARTICLES

- 2007 Photographs & interview **Okanagan Life**
- 1995 Published **Recapitulation-A Journey**, by Sveva Caetani
- 1992 Featured Artist, **Okanagan Life**, written by Carlotte Berglund
- 1989 Illustrated and published an art journal for children **Little Bear Book**
- 1989 Drawings, **Gallerie**, Vancouver based magazine
- 1985 Illustrations for 4 books entitled, **Reflections**, written by Brock Tulley
- 1980 Photographs, **Professional Camera**, May-June issue, Germany
- 1979 100 Photographs published into a book, **Zurich Chamber Orchestra's 25 Year Anniversary**

## WRITING FOR PRINT & FILM

- 2002 Co-wrote film documentary, **The Enigma of Sveva Caetani**
- 1998 Wrote "**The Evening Bird**" feature film script based on the life and art of Sveva Caetani.
- 1997 Wrote an article, *Teaching Children Concentration* published in Common Ground
- 1995 Edited, wrote, and published the art book, **Sveva Caetani - Recapitulation**

## LECTURES & TEACHING

- 2007 British Columbia Art's Council funded lecture series, **Strategies for Teaching Art**
- 2006 Lecture & presentation on the art of Sveva Caetani, B.C. teachers, Salmon Arm
- 2006 Lecture & art workshop for B.C. teachers, Kelowna
- 2005 Invited to lecture & present the **Art of Sveva Caetani** in Rome, Italy.
- 2005 Lecture & art workshop for B.C. teachers, Vernon & Kelowna on Developing Classroom Curriculum
- 1998 Filmed by CBC Spilled Milk with an interview on **Advanced Attention Development** program
- 1997 Lectures & workshops for a meditation program called **Advanced Attention Development**
- 1996 Lecture & presentation on Sveva Caetani, Dante Alighieri Institute, Toronto
- 1995 Lecture & presentation on Sveva Caetani, Italian Cultural Institute, Vancouver

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