

A stylized painting of two birds on a tree branch under a full moon and starry night sky. The background is a deep blue night sky filled with numerous small, glowing yellow stars. A large, pale yellow full moon is positioned in the upper center, partially obscured by the branches of a tree. The tree's branches are dark brown and curve across the frame. Two birds are perched on the branches: one is a toucan with a large, colorful beak (yellow, orange, and red) and yellow and black feathers, and the other is a smaller bird with white and black feathers. The lower portion of the image features large, stylized leaves in shades of red, pink, and purple, some with white dots. The overall style is whimsical and artistic.

DAVID WILSON

Paintings

The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

DAVID WILSON



Paintings

June 27 - August 11, 2013

HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalog: David Wilson - Paintings
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This catalog was created for the exhibition featuring paintings by David Wilson and fibre works by Akira Hanson
at Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC Canada, June 27 - August 11, 2013

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David Wilson commentary by Julie Oakes
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RICH FOG



Micro Publishing
Vernon Canada

DAVID WILSON

Commentary by Julie Oakes



David Wilson paintings at Headbones Gallery - 2013



David Wilson Paintings

Indigenous people have championed ecological concerns, advocating a balance between the environment and man where technology is put in its rightful place – as a tool towards the service of a better end. Recognizing that collective well-being is necessary to maintain the health of the individual, all beings, not just man, are taken into account. David Wilson's paintings depict this relationship between man and the natural world, even going so far as in *The Path of the Sacred Tree* as to leave man entirely out of the picture. In *The Path of the Sacred Tree*, the only evidence of man is the unavoidable authorship of the painting.

David Wilson is a member of the Okanagan Nation and the winner of the BC Achievement Awards in Aboriginal Art for 2012. Wilson's work speaks of the identity and origins of the Okanagan. It articulates traditional motifs executed in brilliant acrylic paint - often on drums. Drawing from pictographs, stories and indigenous imagery influenced by the Maori, North West Coast or Egyptians; Wilson's paintings can be seen as contemporary icons for Wilson is sophisticated in his means. He is linked into technological social systems. He is an activist for indigenous rights and ecological balance. He is conscientious towards the positive potentials of education, working with children in the schools.

With this holistic approach to his place as an artist within the community, David Wilson brings a positive inspiration into a complicated modern life. His work reaches



out. It bridges gaps not only between cultures and backgrounds but also between generations, sociological hierarchies and the widening gaps created by technology. Using vibrant colours with a quick-read graphic style, the work can be appreciated from many levels. The paintings are clear and enlivened so that they catch the eye of younger generations yet also refresh the media-worn vision of the more mature. Fresh in concept and design - crisp - the combinations of geometric and organic shapes create an energy that makes the paintings dance. Each piece is a celebration of life, a return to belief.

Wilson first studied art under Coastal Salish and Haida artists. He had an interest in art from the age of 12 when he first discovered Salish pictographs. He read the seminal publication *Pictographs (Indian Rock Paintings) in The Interior of British Columbia* written by John Corner in 1968 and it brought to light an area of visual knowledge that many in the Okanagan have yet to explore. Currently, Wilson riffs on the imagery from these ancient roots, transforming the wisdom of an earlier time into a brightened version. By reinventing the narratives, the stories gain in relevance. Because he has an impeccable sense of balance and composition, the resulting pictures reverberate with tones from our modern existence. Remembering the other inhabitants of earth that many have overlooked with the hustle and bustle of modernity, Wilson's work connects to the spirits of the animals, the elements and seasons. Man's place in the cosmos is once again in conversation with the natural world. And if the round format happens to be on a drum – made of deer or elk hide and able to be played – then the music made from a simpatico between man and nature can also be sounded.

The extent to which this philosophy maintains the connection with nature is shown in the painting *Woman Created by a Piece of Wolf's Tail*. The woman rides, lounging, on the back of a bushy-tailed wolf with a snake in her hand. This painting tempts comparison to the Biblical story of creation in which the woman, created from a rib of the male, is

tempted by a snake to eat an apple from the tree of knowledge - although God has warned Adam and Eve not to do so. The result is expulsion from the Garden of Eden, a separation from the beauty of nature. However, in *Woman Created by a Piece of Wolf's Tail*, woman is born from a part of an animal. She has an easy relationship to the snake. She is connected in an intrinsic way to the environment and it appears that she enjoys her place within the order of things.

In *Shape-shifting at Coyote Rock* another confirmation of man's closeness to other species is depicted. Man is able to change his shape and become other animals reinforcing the belief that "all is one". This inclusive world picture supports equitable living rather than depicting alienation from the other species and eco systems. The theme of inclusion repeats itself again and again throughout the exhibition. *Brother Sun and Sister Moon*, one of Wilson's latest paintings, has man as the sun and woman as the moon riding in a boat on which there are native depictions of animals as if even the sun and moon are comfortable travelling within the concepts of the indigenous people. In Wilson's art, Man fits in to the overall scheme of things rather than dominating.

Wilson is not lauding technique – the study or science of an art or arts in general - he uses it, in proportion, to serve the end rather than to declare dominion. The words 'study', 'science' or 'art' are all words from man's realm and these advantages that man holds over other species have, in part, worked to the demise of ecology. Technology has created a rift between man and all of the other species as well as having been employed to positive ends. The white man's world - right from the first meetings with the indigenous peoples - came armed and determined to prove dominance. David Wilson, in returning to a more integrated depiction of life as described in the pictographs, helps to reconnect the necessary bond between man and nature.

Although the content may reference pictographs, his technique is almost mechanically executed. He divides tones and hues into striations so that a sky does not meld from a darker blue to a lighter, he stripes or designs through the colour changes. His sun





in *The Path of the Sacred Tree* is a complicated and precise rendering of changing geometries. In *Northern Lights*, the aurora borealis is reminiscent of Matisse's cut outs, Kandinski's playful shapes, energetic Delauney's works or the precursors to the colour pieces of Frank Stella. To add to this modernist handling the small birds in a style that is a combination between traditional and pop, brings about a unique juxtaposition between modes.

Above all, Wilson's paintings suggest answers rather than describe problems. In *Black Robe Speaks*, derived from one of the Salish pictographs, the answer is simple as the lanky woman runs away shrieking from the horrible advance of colonialism. Wilson uses humour to break the ice as he introduces the difficult subject matter. Many of his pieces appeal to a positive aesthetic similar to that which we use for children. With bright colours, graphic clarity, and unthreatening characters looking as though they're having fun coexisting – Wilson tempers the harsher mistakes of civilization by offering a solution that the indigenous peoples knew from long ago. He seems to say “work with, rather than put to work – and often destroy – the bounty of earth”.



Julie Oakes, 2013



David Wilson paintings, Headbones Gallery - 2013

Northern Lights - 2012
Acrylic on canvas, 54x72 inches



Spirit Horse and Rider - 2013
Acrylic on canvas, 18x18 inches



Spirit Horse - 2013
Acrylic on canvas, 20x20 inches



Brother Sun and Sister Moon - 2013
Acrylic on canvas, 54x72 inches



Moon Woman at Dusk - 2013
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



Sun Man at Dawn - 2013
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



Receives Spirit Power From Night Eagle - 2008
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



Golden Eagle Rises East Like The Sun - 2007
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



Makin Deer Medicine Power - 2007
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



Annual Autumn Deer Games - 2007
Acrylic on canvas, 24x24 inches



The Path of the Sacred Tree - 2009
Acrylic on canvas, 36x36 inches



Birth of the Earth Nation at Komasket - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 27 inches



Spirit Bear Island - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 26 inches



Blue Heron Dance - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 21 inches



Ask The Little People They Will Tell You About Ogopogo - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 26 inches



Owl Rider - 2012
Acrylic on Elk skin, 12 inches



Owl and Ravens - 2012
Acrylic on Elk skin, 15 inches



Shape Shifting At Coyote Rock - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 19 inches



Woman Who Was Created By A Piece of Wolves Tail - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 18 inches



Black Robe Speaks - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 14 inches



Womb of Mother Earth - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 14 inches



The Old Woman of the Woods That Eats Wayward Children - 2007
Acrylic on Elk skin, 10 inches



Owl and Shaman - 2009
Acrylic on Elk skin, 12 inches



Spirit Of Moose Lake - 2006
Acrylic on Deer skin, 21 inches



Eagle Rider - 2006
Acrylic on Deer skin, 17 inches



Bear Song - 2007
Acrylic on Deer skin, 17 inches



DAVID WILSON - SOOKINAKIN

Born 1960 - Vernon, British Columbia

Exhibitions – Solo

- 2013 David Wilson - Paintings, Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2012 We Still Follow the Water, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2012 We Follow the Way of Water, Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Kelowna, BC
- 2010 Celebration of Salish Pictographs, Salmon Arm Gallery, Salmon Arm, BC
- 2010 David Wilson Sookinakin, Vernon Museum, BC
- 2010 Sookinakin Art, Armstrong Art Gallery, Armstrong, BC
- 2007 Power Comes in the Form of a Circle, Vernon Public Art Gallery, BC

Exhibitions – Group

- 2006 Roads to Indigenous Journeys, Vernon Public Art Gallery, BC
- 2009 Heritage, Vernon Public Art Gallery, BC
- 2011 Alternator post card exhib./fundraiser, Alternator Gallery, Kelowna, BC
- 2011 Midsummer Eve of the Arts Fundraiser, Vernon Public Art Gallery, Vernon, BC
- 2011 Geo-Tag-Art, Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Kelowna, BC

Commissions

- 2011 Vernon Performing Arts Centre, Return of the Owl Clan, painting, 5 x 7 feet
- 2011 Vernon Jubilee Hospital, Changing Seasons, painting, diptych, 5 x 7.5 feet each
- 2011 Little Hawk Drumming Group (First Nations Pow Wow Drum Group), large double-sided Pow Wow drum, 30 inches diameter
- 2010 Kelowna Community Theatre, Ki low na Dreams Two-Legged Power, 4 x 4 feet
- 2010 City of Vernon, Sacred Okanagan Waters, Great Sacred Flower Tree, 3 x 3 feet each
- 2011 Armstrong Interior Provincial Exhibition, Sun man and Eagle, 16 feet diameter Tepee, Fulton High School
- 2008 Vernon Friendship Centre, Logo, Every New Day Reach For the Stars, 12 x 16 inches
- 2001 Kla How Ya, Logo, Frog, 12 x 12 inch
- 1996 Vancouver Friendship Centre, theatrical backdrop (traditional button blanket design), 19 x 9 feet

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