

Nancy Whiteside –*Corvids in Covid*

Visual Description

This exhibit is of 11 images by Nancy Whiteside. I will describe 5 of the works. They are arranged on large, freestanding gallery panels covered in a beige carpet-like material. There are four double sided panels, stacked in a line, running north-south. The panel faces also point north-south. The panels are numbered 1 through 8, with 1 being the northernmost panel, 2 being the south facing panel on the rear side of panel 1, and so on, through panel 8 being the southernmost panel. Most panels have 1 image on each, but some of the smaller images are in groups of 2.

Nancy says of her work:

I have found that I never know how inspiration will present itself, or what direction I might take as a painter. At the moment I am painting primarily representational images, but I also find myself drawn to the abstract. There is a high degree of realism in this body of work, as I relish capturing the fine detail of a Raven's luminous eye, or a Robin's fragile claw. But I have also attempted to introduce some more abstract, interpretive elements into some pieces, as visual contrast and relief.

Many of these works were painted over the course of the Pandemic, when I found myself yearning for the beauty and enchantment of the natural world. I wanted to juxtapose this against the reality of the Corona virus, also a product of the natural world.

I am currently painting in acrylics. The influence of the emotional 'punch' in the colors of artists like Vincent Van Gogh inspires me in the use of highly saturated color in my own work, to capture the luminous, rich vision I see in my mind's eye.

Panel 1 – Changeling (24"x30" horizontal orientation, acrylic canvas, unframed)

This image shows the upper 2/3 of a crow on a flat, light green background. Its body is turned toward the right, but it has twisted its head so shows the left side of its face in profile, its beak pointing to the left side of the picture. The bird is dramatically clad in feathers of unexpected iridescence and colour. The head and shoulders have precisely articulated feathers ranging from the tiny downy feathers around the beak and upper head to the larger neck feathers, all in shades of bright blue, highlighted in purple. There are even a few greenish or brownish feathers around the eye and cheek, all of which suggest an extreme iridescence of colour. Further down the body, the feathers are somewhat less distinct and detailed, and are various warm earth tones of browns, reds, and yellows. The bird's beak reflects some of the blue and purple feathers, and also the light source for the image which comes from the upper left corner.

Panel 2 – Wake up call (16" diameter circle, unframed acrylic on wood tondo)

The next image is a perfect circle, and features a close up of a European Robin singing. The bird is perched on a twig with buds that have not yet emerged, and which runs on a low diagonal, from the upper left to the lower right of the circle. A few other twigs are visible in the background, two vertical ones to the right of the bird and one to the far left. Because the twig is on an angle, the bird's red feet are displaced. The lower foot reaches down to the right and the upper one is bent at a sharp angle and reaches up to the left. Unlike the American Robin with its dark head, the European Robin has a red breast which extends all up its neck and across its face. The bright orangish red of the bird's coloration anchors the centre of the picture, as we look up at it. The bird's beak is open in song, and we can see inside its mouth. The black eye gleams. The rest of its body is brownish grey, with darker tail, wing tips and head and lighter belly. An orange reflection is seen on its lower rear belly, just above the right leg. There is much detail in the feathers across the chest and belly. The background, apart from the twigs, is mostly bright blue sky with a bit of white cloud in a band across the centre of the picture. In the lower left corner, is some greenery, but it is out of focus. The bright colours of this picture are very cheery.

Panel 3 – Covid Corvid (30"x15", landscape orientation, unframed acrylic on canvas)

The next image is a shoulders up profile of a raven with its big hooked beak pointing toward the left side of the picture. The sleek feathers of the head and back, and its astonishing 'cravat' of different sized feathers, are all rendered in iridescent tones of black and grey, highlighted in red. The brown eye, circled in white sizes up the viewer. Behind the crow is an abstract background that is unidentifiable as objects, but has some strong shapes. It is out of focus, in contrast to the highly detailed bird, and is painted in grey, blue, and brown tones with a bit of yellow. There are two diagonal lines that pass directly behind the beak, and cross over each other. The one closer to the bird is pale pink and bends slightly to the left. The one behind it is straighter and more brown. Behind these two lines is a semi-circle around the bottom left corner of the picture frame and disappearing behind the bird's body. It is darker brown. Above it is a yellow glow, as if the sun is appearing over the horizon. To the rear of the bird's head and continuing out to the right of the frame is a series of circles which are half pale pink, half light blue. Below them, darker blue pain bleeds down into the yellow glow.

Panel 4 – fortified with iron, niacin, and thiamin (16"x12" in landscape presentation, unframed acrylic on a wood cradle)

This work shows a blackbird in the centre of the painting surrounded by fallen apples. The bird is featured in profile facing the left of the canvas, and is luminous black, with one bright black eye outlined in orange turned toward us. There is a reflection visible in the eye, but it's unclear what it is reflecting. The beak is orangish-brown and is pointed slightly upward. The bird is standing on a bunch of rocks which have grass poking through between them. We can see some of the bird's left foot, but the other is hidden behind the rock and grass. The bird's back provides a strong diagonal line from the top left of the picture toward the bottom right. Some of the feathers on the bird's breast, back and wings, are detailed in white, which gives the impression of light glinting off the shiny black feathers. The outer half of the wing has some rustier tones in it, in contrast to the rest of the feathers. The bird is standing above one apple that is in clear detail. The top 1/3 of the apple looks as if it has been pecked away, and some of the white flesh is visible. The blossom end of the apple is toward us (the apple is lying on its side), and we can see a small blemish on the bottom of the apple, and the reds and yellows of its skin showing the reflection of the light. The other apples (there are approximately 9 visible in the image) are arranged up to the top left corner of the painting and across the top 1/3 of the image but are out of focus in the background. They range in colour from red to yellow to green and some brown. The rest of the background is indistinct browns and earth tones, suggesting the earth where the bird is standing.

Panel 6 – Ignorance is bliss (12"x6.5", portrait orientation, unframed mixed media on wood cradle)

The final image is more abstract than the others. The sparrow is perched on a twig which crosses the picture diagonally from lower left to slightly higher on the right side. The bird is facing away from us, but has its head turned so we see its head in profile, with the beak pointed to the right. The bird and twig are rendered in a monochrome dark brown paint, which highly detailed feathers and markings, as well as lichens and bark on the twig. The bird looks appears to be a line drawing. Through the monochrome of the bird, however, the abstract background of the painting comes through. There are large orange and yellow textured horizontal streaks across the top half of the painting, overlaid with two blue rough O shapes, one larger (higher and to the left) and one smaller (lower and to the right, running out of the side of the painting. There are also hot pink paint streaks and blobs in various angles and curves. In the lower half of the painting, the colours are more blue and grey, with some yellow continued from the top. There are textures which resemble honeycomb or streaky water. The textures of the background look a bit like silk-screened textures, with colours visible as distinct one on top of the other. The entire piece is coated in a thick, transparent resin or top coat, which makes the surface shiny.