

Artists of William Street Gallery

DARREN THOMPSON

A graduate of the Graphic Design program at Fanshawe College, over the years Darren Thompson has gradually become more involved in fine art. He opened his first gallery, the SandBox, in Port Stanley in 1987. Crickets—a wonderfully charming coach house surrounded by magnificent gardens on a country road outside Sparta—was Darren's next gallery. Last year he returned to Port Stanley, opening William Street Gallery where he enjoys the laid back atmosphere and opportunity to chat with visiting tourists and travellers.



Photo courtesy of Robin Masse

Darren's paintings captivate the viewer with their vibrant colours and strong visual impact.

He was recognized in 2006 by Hillebrand Estates Winery. They chose three of his pieces from more than 300 entries, to appear on their Artist Series wine labels.

Darren talked to Relish Elgin recently about his art.

What is your approach to painting?

My approach to painting is to keep it simple. Graphic design elements are quite strong in my work. I like to blend elements of graphic design into my paintings, usually geometric and repetitive patterns. Symbols and icons are often central to my art.

I enjoy using bright, bold colours and strong shapes and at present, work mostly in acrylic on board.

Has your approach changed over time?

My approach has definitely changed over the years towards stronger basic shapes, less brush strokes, less detail. Your art reflects who you are and your experiences as well. As I try to simplify my life, that influences my art.

What sparked your interest in being an artist?

I have always been an artist, and never thought of being anything else. I am thankful to my grade one teacher, who recognized my

creative potential and told my parents that I was going to be an artist.

How would you describe where you are at with your art now?

Midpoint, just as I am myself, in my life. Art is a reflection of this process.

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What are your future goals?

To keep on doing what I love to do, to explore and observe along the way, and express these experiences through painting. I want to continue to do my commercial work as well—I love designing logos which really are symbols!

Though Darren's art has become "simpler", that certainly isn't to say it doesn't evoke thought. Most of his pieces are alive with movement, and often include or suggest significant cultural symbols. His pieces invite the viewer to take a journey of imagination and he likes to let people interpret them on their own terms—after that, he is more than willing to share his inspiration.

Darren celebrates his family, friends and life's simple pleasures with a sense of fun, an outlook that clearly extends to his art. He is also an avid kayaker—you can almost picture him bouncing along shimmering Lake Erie waves, catching a little joy to share in his next painting.

Darren's **Koi** graces the cover of this issue. The painting on the previous page is entitled **Blue Raven**, and **Mermaid** is below (all acrylic on masonite). Check out Darren's installation at the Windjammer Inn & Bistro (324 Smith St., Port Stanley) till the end of May.



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