

A long, winding road to painting

Wed, Oct 5
2005
Chronicle
Herald

Morrison likes to work outside, drawn by colour, landscape

By **ELISSA BARNARD**
Arts Reporter

On-site painter Carol Morrison has always had an intense reaction to nature; however, expressing it in paint was a problem.

"The hardest thing I found when I was going through NSCAD was trying to get out of a detailed, icky-picky style into something more bold and expressive," she says. "I hadn't been able to be aggressive and forceful enough."

Her advisor at NSCAD, Nova Scotia artist Gerald Ferguson, pointed her in the direction of Tom Thomson. Morrison, who'd only seen pictures of Thomson's paintings, and her husband flew up to Ottawa to see the Tom Thomson retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada. "It was just mind-boggling."

She brought the catalogue home, and, at Ferguson's urging, copied a few Thomson paintings. "I don't like to copy but it really did help to realize how he used his brush and I started using it that way in my on-site paintings."

All of Morrison's paintings, on exhibit at Art Pieces Gallery, Bedford, have been painted outdoors except for *Apple Blossoms*. Her works have a sparkling vitality and the viewer can sense the artist's hands and heart at work in an unstudied way.

Morrison's brush strokes are visible, her lines full of electricity, and many pieces have a solid and interesting composition like *Apple Blossoms*,



Apple Blossoms, by Carol Morrison, is in her solo exhibit at Art Pieces Gallery, Bedford, through Saturday.

soms, the simpler *Flowering Quince* with an arc of red flowers against a green background and two paintings from *Fish Lake* featuring a pink flowering bush in spring time.

Morrison, who lives on *Fish Lake* at Oakfield, is constantly in her hatchback driving around looking for paths or roads to take her into wilder areas. What attracts her to scenes are colour and a pattern she detects within the vegetation or landscape.

Her two paintings of *Fish Lake* were inspired by driving past a path that goes into a spot where people launch their

boats. She caught a glimpse of pink. Her painting of *Economy Falls*, which she sold to an Ottawa man who was in the province for a wedding and who saw her painting it, came about on a day trip to paint *Five Islands*. Instead, she saw the sign for *Economy Falls*. "The road got narrower and bumpier. It turns out the paths are really nice. I was amazed at how many people had made it out there. This guy was so surprised to see an artist."

Morrison's paintings range from pastel colours to intense reds and greens, from a serene pale milky blue painting of the

Bedford Basin to a blazing fall scene of burning trees beneath a storm cloud in the *Wentworth valley*. Her subject matter jumps from lupins and *Northern Lights azaleas* to an abandoned wharf at *Annapolis Royal* and the *MaryAnn Falls* in *Cape Breton*.

Born in Leeds, England, Morrison immigrated in 1964 to Halifax to work as a research scientist with the department of fisheries and oceans.

She was astonished by the Canadian landscape which is "completely different" from the English countryside. "Maybe that's why I felt such kinship to Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven. The others did have a lot of training in England, some were English."

Morrison, who has a Ph.D. from Dalhousie University, worked at Fisheries and Oceans until 1997 when the Lower Water Street laboratory was closed. Since then she has worked as a consultant and works part-time with the transplant unit at the *IWK Health Centre*.

She graduated this past spring from NSCAD University with a BFA, and applied for an award from the *Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation* for artists at the beginning stages of their careers and working in figurative or representational art. "The next thing I knew I got this cheque by registered mail for \$12,500 which is wonderful because all the travelling around is an expense. That was a big surprise for me because it is for an emerging art-

ist," says Morrison, who considers painting her second career.

Morrison also paints portraits as commissions and has painted urban images to submit in the *Art, Sales and Rental Gallery's* upcoming *Cityscapes* show. "I've done a service station and the *Dartmouth refinery* and I find them magnificent too."

She exhibits through Saturday at *Art Pieces*, 1242 *Bedford Highway* (turn at *ZigZag Hair*). The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, and Thursday evening by appointment. Call 832-3566. The gallery website is www.artpieces-gallery.ca.

Morrison's paintings are also at the *Video Difference Store* on the *Bedford Highway* opposite the *Art Pieces Gallery*, at *Art Sales and Rentals Gallery* next to the *Art Gallery of Nova Scotia*, and online at <http://myweb.sprint.ca/carolmorrison> and <http://vans.ednet.ns.ca/cmorrison.html>.

By:
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Morrison