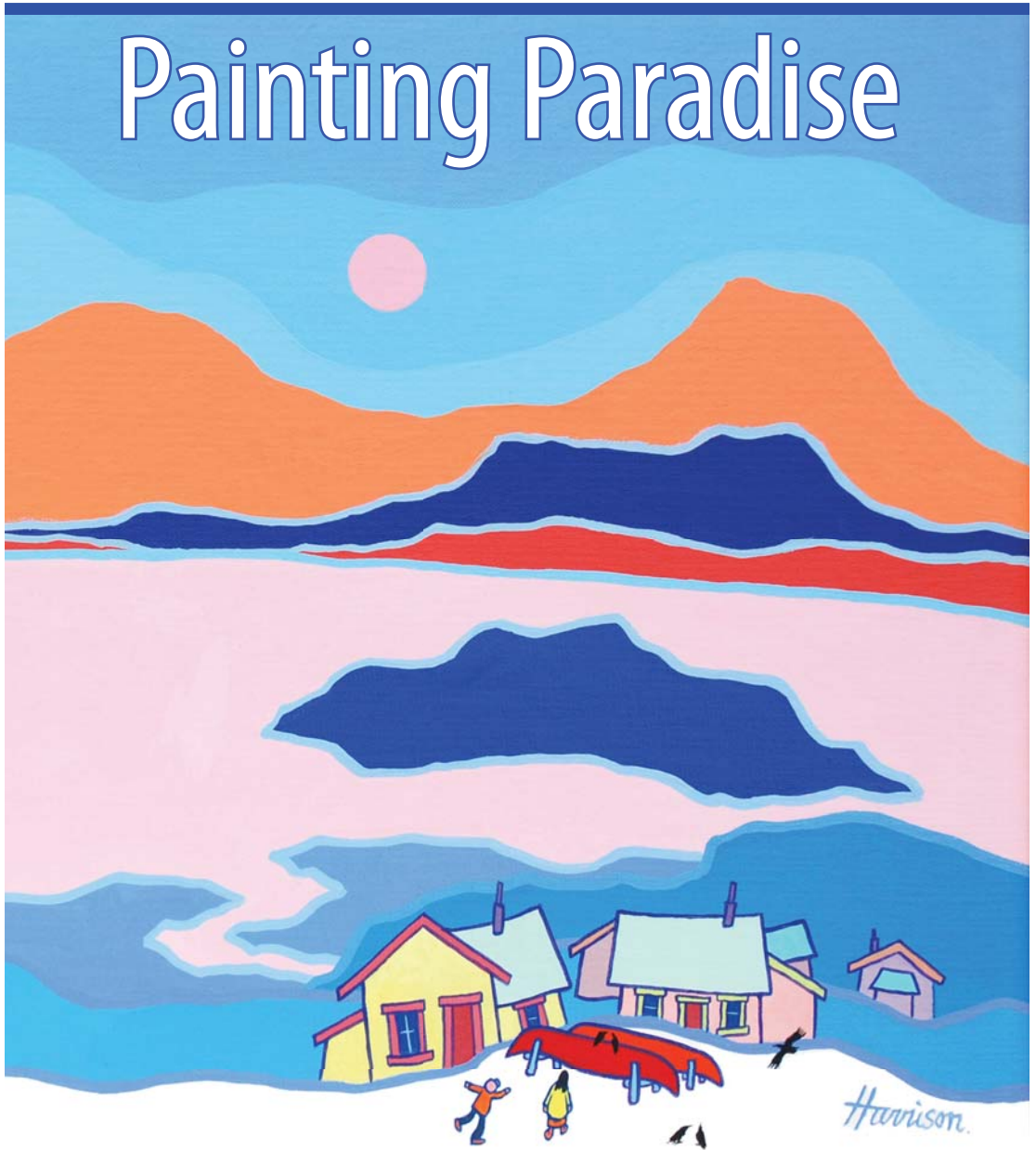


Ted Harrison:

Painting Paradise



University
of Victoria

Art Collections

Legacy Art Gallery and Café
August 19 to November 29, 2009

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

"I paint because I must."

This year marks Ted Harrison's fortieth anniversary as a Canadian artist. *Painting Paradise* honours this milestone and the artistic legacy he has brought to the Yukon, British Columbia and all of Canada. Harrison was profoundly influenced by the power of place. While writing his biography, I learned that his artistic expression evolved from his adventures in disparate parts of the world: his growing-up years in Durham County, a coal-mining region in northeast England; his adventures in India and East Africa with a British military intelligence unit; several years in Malaysia and the gentle loveliness of New Zealand. Cezanne, Hundertwasser, and the great British artists J.S. Lowry and Norman Cornish, who painted everyday experiences—and everyday people—also influenced his visual articulation.

The early paintings he rendered while living in England, those he painted while abroad, and his more highly recognized Yukon works illuminate his affection for life's ordinary, very human experiences: the death of a miner, children playing games, little dogs chasing ravens, whales frolicking in the sea. "The best of life is at our doorstep," says Harrison. "I can find inspiration by just looking out the window."

Although educated at the West Hartlepool College of Art, when he came to the Yukon, he dismissed the dictates of his formal training to develop a distinct, yet elegantly crafted style. Elements of his joyful, highly imaginative work nod toward the Naive or Primitive schools, yet it most closely resembles the genre of Expressionism. If you ask Harrison, he will venture to say his work belongs to "the School of Cheery!"



The works presented in this collection are a testament to the influence of place and the power of imagination. Careful observation reveals repeating motifs. One can also observe the Maori influences in spirals, cloisonnism and simplicity. Ever-looming backgrounds of mountains, echo the slag heaps of his Durham County village scenes, and the inclusion of families, are reminders of his formative years. I conjecture that Harrison is painting his childhood, albeit in a variety of locales.

Harrison's artistic evolution is clearly evident. A palette of pure, rich colours contrasts sharply with the more somber tones of his County Durham works, painted prior to his move to the Yukon in 1969. When he arrived in Canada in 1967, muddy greens, yellows and burnt reds soon transformed into vibrant blues, and brilliant yellow, orange and pinks. Playful villages and mischievous vignettes replaced sober landscapes and serious village scenes. Those—and the sense of fun—define his Yukon. When Harrison moved to Victoria, BC. in 1993, his subject matter reflected the Canadian west coast, albeit with a distinct Yukon flavour. Whatever he paints, skies swirl, colours collide and viewers smile.

Such is the gift Harrison gives us. "I've seen terrible things in my life," he says. "I grew up in the Depression and saw dreadful poverty. During my military service I witnessed callousness, riots and even murder. That's why I vowed to only paint happy subjects." Harrison's artistic legacy gives us a respite from the busyness of everyday life. It cautions us to live gently wherever we may reside—to experience the joy that surrounds us all, if we take time to notice.

Katherine Gibson
Guest Curator
August, 2009
Victoria, BC

LIST OF WORKS

Portrait of Ted Harrison, *artist* David Goatley, *oil on board* 79 x 94.6 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

EARLY YEARS

Miners Playing Quoits, oil on board, 1950, 63.5 x 51 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Miners & Whippets, oil on board, 1950, 73.6 x 68.5 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Miner's Funeral, acrylic on board, 1966, 43 x 92 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

MALAYSIAN INFLUENCE

Dulang Girl, conte on paper, 1958, 53 x 35.5 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

NEW ZEALAND INFLUENCE

Boomers & Joey, oil on board, 1967, 53 x 43 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Toro Ahua, oil and wax on board, 1966, 58 x 83 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Moko Lizard, oil and wax on board, 1966, 46 x 56 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

EARLY YUKON

Mountains Bennett Lake, oil on board, 1968, 85 x 56 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Yukon Crucifixion, acrylic on board, 1968, 128 x 63.5 cm
Private Collection

Still Life, Crag Lake, acrylic on board, 1978, 61 x 91 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Regina Hotel, acrylic on board, 1969, 48 x 81 cm
Ted Harrison Collection





Miners & Whippets, oil on board, 1950

Charles, acrylic on board, 1968, 56 x 91 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Child of the Midnight Sun, acrylic on board, 1971
56 x 71 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Prospector Charles, acrylic on board, 1970, 38 x 51 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Virginia & Little Bear, acrylic on board, 1970 38 x 61 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

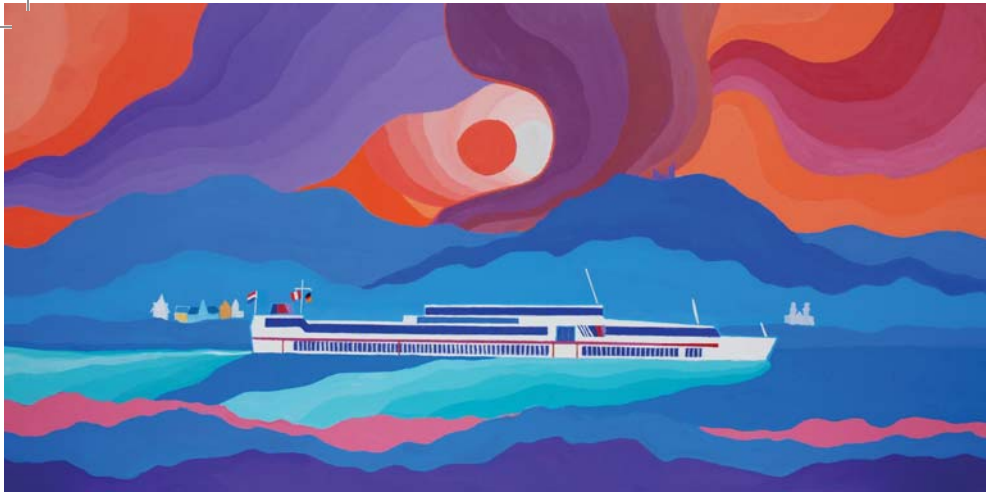
Artist & Family, acrylic on board, 1973, 48 x 68.5 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Long Street, acrylic on board, 1972, 61 x 122 cm
Private Collection Mid and Late Yukon Periods

Nicky's Lake, acrylic on canvas, 1981, 61 x 92 cm
Private Collection

Snow Fall, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 25.4 x 43 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Yukon (Carcross) Funeral, acrylic on board, 1973
61 x 61 cm
Ted Harrison Collection



Cruiseline Boat, acrylic on canvas, 1970s

DISCOVERY DAYS

Sledding, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 25.4 x 43 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Winter Day, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 25.4 x 37 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Bird Series - Ravens, acrylic on canvas 25.4 x 37 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Ravens of the Yukon, acrylic on board, 1977
43 x 31.75 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Hanging Sky, acrylic on canvas, 1981, 61 x 92 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Untitled, acrylic on canvas, date unknown,
82.5 x 50 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Sketching in Paradise, acrylic on canvas, 2005
41 x 61 cm
Private Collection

BC PERIOD

Whale Watching, acrylic on canvas, 79 x 109 cm
Private Collection



Walking Alone, acrylic on canvas, 2000, 76 x 61 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Cruiseline Boat, acrylic on canvas, 1970s, 121 x 58 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

North America Series, West Coast of Canada
acrylic on canvas, 2003, 39 x 46.5 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

North America Series, West Coast Whales
acrylic on canvas, 2003, 39 x 46.5 cm
Ted Harrison Collection

Commonwealth Series, Swimming, acrylic on canvas, 1994
61 x 91 cm
Private Collection

Commonwealth Series, Diving, acrylic on canvas, 1994
61 x 91 cm
Private Collection

Commonwealth Series, Cycling, acrylic on canvas, 1994
61 x 91 cm
Private Collection



Bird Series - Ravens, acrylic on canvas, n.d.

This exhibition was developed from the book:

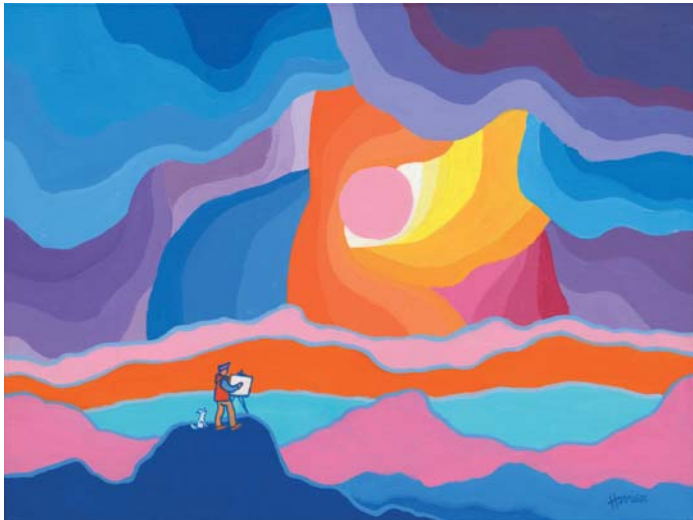
Gibson, Katherine. *Ted Harrison: Painting Paradise*

Crown Publications, Victoria, BC. August 2009

Pages: 269 ISBN: 978-0-9809674-1-8

The Collector's Edition of **Painting Paradise** includes a giclee print of "Sketching in Paradise" which inspired the title of the book. It also includes a DVD retrospective of Harrison's most important paintings. These are accompanied with music by Canadian composer Christine Hanson, a six-movement suite she calls "The Cremation of Sam McGee," inspired by Ted Harrison and Robert Service.

Available at the **Legacy Art Gallery and Café** gift shop.



Sketching in Paradise, acrylic on canvas, 2005

ABOUT TED

Ted Harrison C.M., RCA is a celebrated artist, author, and teacher whose work resonates with the spirit of Canada and its people. From his earliest days growing up in an English colliery village, he sought out adventures that eventually led him to India, East Africa, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Canada. He finally staked his claim in the Yukon, becoming one of Canada's most beloved artists.

Ted Harrison's list of awards is as long as a Yukon winter. He was the first Canadian to exhibit at the prestigious International Children's Book Exhibition in Bologna, Italy, in 1978. He holds the Order of Canada, the Order of British Columbia, and four honorary doctorate degrees.

Harrison's paintings hang in prestigious galleries and private collections throughout the world. He is also a bestselling author and has illustrated several books including the perennial favourites, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* and *O Canada*.

Ted Harrison: Painting Paradise is the first biography to celebrate the interminable optimism and courageous artistic style of this gentle, determined man. It explores his personal journey and artistic ascent with a riveting, skillfully crafted narrative, highlighted by personal photographs and rare images of his work.





Regina Hotel, acrylic on board, 1969



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Director: Martin Segger

Curatorial Staff

Caitlin Cuthbert, Sarah Delaney, Bryn Dharmaratne,
Darcy Douglas, Mark Hovey, Julia Hulbert, Cindy Vance,
Dallas Tomniuk.

Sponsoring Partners

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and the Harrison family for their support and loan of works for
this exhibition.

Ted Harrison Foundation
tedharrison.ca

Victoria Children's Museum

Crown Publications



CROWN PUBLICATIONS
Queen's Printer for British Columbia



Cover Image: **Untitled**, acrylic on canvas, date unknown



Legacy Art Gallery and Café
Wed - Sun, 10am - 5pm
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legacygallery.ca
Admission is Free