



Richard Tetrault: Taking It from the Street

He is a keen observer of the landscape around him and has developed his own visual vocabulary of images and symbolic elements.

Crows appear frequently in his work: he considers them stand-ins for residents of the Downtown Eastside, a resilient set of survivors who are fighting to maintain their territory against numerous odds, each with a story to tell. “Crows activate the urban environment with a presence that is both

mythic and mundane. Omnipresent in my part of the city, the crow has a tenacity, adaptability and social quality that demand both respect and space. I have given crows a special place in my work, in particular, as communicators and symbols of survivors of displacement and urbanization.”

A key part of his work is community based murals, often as a teacher and facilitator rather than merely as a lead artist. He particularly enjoys the temporary community that is created while doing a group mural and the unexpected and sometimes serendipitous things that emerge from the collaborative process. This process helps residents reclaim their community, strengthen cultural identity and foster a better sense of place. Ideally, the projects help to empower residents to become socially engaged. He has done numerous collaborative murals in the Vancouver area, including several as part of the City of Vancouver’s “Creative Beginnings” program in 2008, which was designed to celebrate the history, heritage, and culture of Vancouver’s first urban areas (see vancouvermurals.ca), as well as collaborations with muralists from Mexico, Cuba, Argentina and other parts of Canada.

As a printmaker, Richard employs the method of relief printing where the medium (usually wood or linoleum) is cut into to reveal the desired image in relief. Negative spaces are removed by gouging, etching or scratching, leaving only the essential parts of the image.



He has taught portrait and life drawing at the Carnegie Centre in the 1980's using local residents as life models, printmaking workshops at Malaspina and woodblock workshops on Saltspring Island. He has also worked as an artist-in-residence in every school district in the Lower Mainland.

"In my paintings and prints, I aim to reconstruct observed reality to present images that fuse the allegorical and mythical with the commonplace. I hope to project a parallel world that draws the viewer into a dialogue with this imagery. Viewers can establish their own responses and interpretations, and when the work resonates, it has succeeded." (Artist's statement from 2008)

Currently Richard has recent large-scaled woodcuts in an exhibition called Touch Wood, organized through the Celia Duthie Gallery, which runs at the Van Dusen Gardens Discovery Gallery until September 3rd. The prints "explore a range of relief print methods, many incorporating a multitude of blocks, or matrix, overlaid in transparencies to suggest time, transience and metaphorical passages."

Please join Richard at the Ferry Building Gallery for the Opening Reception of "Time and Place" on September 9th at 6 pm and at our Meet the Artist on Saturday, September 13th at 2 pm. He will also be doing an Art Insider presentation at the gallery on September 24th and a free printmaking demonstration as part of Culture Days on Sunday September 28th. More details can be found at ferrybuildinggallery.com and richard-tetrault.ca.

