

**Virginia Caldwell** is a uniquely talented Canadian artist who lives and breathes art. In her own words...

“ To teach yourself to be in the moment and to be taken on a journey of creativity is a form of prayer for me .”

Innately talented, Virginia exhibited artistic ability well beyond her years at an early age. At the age of eleven she was given a small set of oil paints which opened up a visual creative journey that includes many experiences and opportunities. Virginia was a student of the European portrait artist Gabor Lasszner, and is well read in visual arts as an integral part of her life long immersion in all aspects of artistic life.

From 1979 to 1989 the artist's medium was acrylic on wood. Small hand painted artifacts given as Christmas presents formed the basis of producing hand painted earrings, neck pieces and pins as wearable art. These items were entered in juried art and craft shows all over Southwestern Ontario, including the Burlington Art and Craft Show and the Niagara On The Lake Art Show.

By this time Virginia's products were marketed to various companies and galleries under the registered company Wear Your "Art" Inc. During this time Virginia's work was also chosen by Toronto's Del Bello Gallery to be exhibited at the International Miniature Art Exhibition featuring artists from thirty - two countries. Virginia Caldwell's art is commanding , dynamic , and universal - transcending the test of time - and is characterized by a discerning eye for form, function, and technique. Her personal style draws influence from modern artists and sculptors yet is never an imitation thereof. She constantly stretches her creative ability, pushes compositional boundaries, and embraces all kinds of subject matter.

Since 2002 her medium has been acrylic on canvas. She has three technical styles - High Realism, Abstract, and Whimsical. Recently the artist has begun to explore the development of a unique architectural style as well. Virginia can successfully move from one style to the other at will. Virginia's artwork on canvas has been and is now featured at several venues in London Ontario .These include London's regional art gallery at Museum London, The Art Bank Gallery, Art Work's Etc. Gallery, Reflections Art And Framing, London Health Sciences Centre, and the Springs Restaurant .

## Artist Statement By

### Bonnie (Bonn) Richardson

There is struggle in living. There is chaos. There is light. My work is a reflection of my ongoing journey of personal growth and an offering of hope realized from travelling through the dark places in search of light.

For over 35 years I have been entranced with painting as a way of exploring my creativity. While working in an office in my early 20s, one of my colleagues convinced me to take a painting class. I registered at our local college for a watercolour course. The second my brush dipped into the water and paint and touched my paper, something deep inside woke up. The exhilaration I felt that day has led me to a lifelong love affair with painting as a way of expressing myself.

I have taken many art classes over the years and continue to push the boundaries of paint by working in my studio every day. I view myself as a 'student of life' and never tire of learning. I love the challenge of problem-solving during my painting process.

I have had the good fortune to meet some wonderful art mentors during my adventures, mainly Gerry Squires from Newfoundland while I lived there and Pierre A.J. Sabourin from Killarney where my family camped for years. Both these painters helped me see with an artistic eye and helped me fine tune my craft.

Four years ago as I was painting representational scenes from northern Ontario, my hands actually refused to paint another stroke. I hit a creative roadblock. I looked at my hands and began asking myself some serious questions. "What is going on? Am I done painting? Is this all there is creatively for me? Is there anything else I have to offer?"

I sat with these questions and let them roll around inside me for quite some time, mainly 2 weeks. That is an eternity when you have a creative block. The world of abstraction started bubbling up in my mind. I got countless books from the library and started reading about why accomplished painters took off in an abstract direction, embracing an art form that was totally different from what they were comfortable with. Each abstract painter I studied had something different to say, something beyond what the eye could see, something that called from deep within themselves.

For me to embark on the abstract journey is to enter into a different realm beyond normal thought. I have been very blessed of late to have found an abstract mentor in Virginia Henderson Caldwell. She is graciously guiding me with exercises in self-exploration. I am learning to get my ego out of the way, trusting in the channel to guide me so I can become a conduit. This new way of working is intensely personal and spiritual.

I have made the switch from watercolours to acrylics due to the rich textural and sculptural component that makes my new work challenging and very satisfying. This medium allows me to mold and shape my thoughts and feelings into a more 3 dimensional space. The endless combination of paint colours is a constant source of inspiration which keeps my love of painting alive. When I paint, I feel like I'm dancing.