

NICHOLE

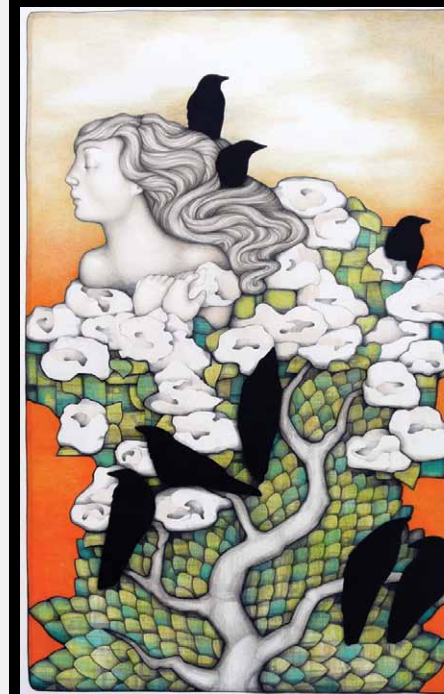
JACQUELINE

YANOTA



FERNIE IN THE SUMMER is the perfect place to hike mountains all day and come downtown for some amazing food and boutique shopping. My first visit to Fernie was in the summer of 2001. The community has a great energy and there is a vibrant, artistic atmosphere in its downtown. I'm originally from the small town of Cave Creek, Arizona, and this area was my solace from the heat of the desert. I moved to the Crowsnest Pass in 2006, confident that this area was home. In the last few years, I've had the opportunity to show my work alongside the talented local artists of the Fernie Art's Co-op, as well as having my exhibition "Blackbird Garden" featured at the Fernie Art's Station during the month of April. Recently I was involved in creating a book cover illustration for the Redberry Press, a new literary journal being published out of Fernie by Keith Liggett, Randal Macnair, and Nic Milligan.

I've always been a creative person, but the extreme change in landscape really sparked the rush of inspiration and the determination to create collections of work. I began working with the theme of nature's connection to the human spirit. I've been exploring the union between humans and the natural world, as we find ourselves working to preserve this



connection in light of our impact. This creative process helps me maintain my awareness and find optimism.

My work is done primarily in coloured pencils, which surprises many people. We all grew up using them, but for some reason, I stuck with it. I have portfolios of really hilarious work I did when I was 10 - 12 years old of drawings of my friends and comic strips I'd made up. It's funny seeing what I do with the same pencils years later!

People always ask me why there are so many birds in my work, especially ravens. Birds symbolize many things: the human soul, existing between earth and the heavens, being messengers, even as foretellers of death. There are so many ravens in this area, and I admire their intelligent, opportunist behavior. I find birds so expressive in their symbolism, language and movement.

Beyond the birds and leaves, the female figure is mainly my subject. The softness and roundness of her form allows for a fluidity in relationship with the natural elements, but mostly she provides a sensitivity to these elements. She is not an onlooker, but fits into them. She encompasses the gentle strength



to energize the whole picture, the way our mothers, sisters, friends, and grandmothers do for us. The male figure is also integrated in my work as a symbol of strength, understanding, and energy.

I'd love to do more illustrative work in the future as I'm continuing to find my place in these communities. I really enjoy having a few exhibitions a year, where I can process a theme through a body of work. I was recently inspired by the Otesha Project, a traveling group of performers who actively spread the message of sustainable living. I think art has many purposes, one of them being communicating the passion in the artist's life.

You can view some of my work now showing at the Fernie Art's Co-op, as well as in a group exhibition in Nelson, B.C. at Gallery 378 inside the Craft Connection. I have an upcoming exhibition in a group show "This is Who I Am" at the Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery that shows July 4 - September 7. I'm currently working on some new pieces and am always in search of my next venue.

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