

Philip Buytendorp



written by Kylie Serebrin

As a boy, Philip Buytendorp never found himself at a loss for artistic inspiration. His father, George Buytendorp, was a renowned Dutch-born Canadian painter and fine art restorer who obtained his formal artistic training at the Academy of Fine Arts and Related Sciences in The Hague, Netherlands (like Philip's grandfather, before him). His mother was a potter who was constantly experimenting with glazes and oxides. Born and raised in Brandon, Manitoba, Philip's childhood abounded with classical music appreciation, art exhibitions and weekend outings to paint the

in Philip's house. From an early age, his parents instilled and exemplified the belief that value directly equates to effort – a lesson that has guided Philip's creative journey ever since. "After work, my father would sequester himself in the basement, painting in oil, acrylic or watercolour, working on a linocut, a dry point or an acid etching. Sometimes he'd even be polishing stones for jewellery or melting different enamel powders on to copper designs," he recounts. Philip's mother, though chiefly occupied with raising six children, was also his father's most discerning critic. "She had an eye for bold design, strong colour and economy of execution," he notes.



left, Nicola Sheds, oil on canvas, 36" x 24"

above, Behind the Cabins, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"

southern Manitoba countryside. "Between those activities, the perpetual displaying of my dad's work while it dried on our living room walls, and the extensive library of art books my parents kept, source material and stimulation were not hard to find," he recalls with gratitude.

Firm encouragement and paragons of artistic discipline were also cornerstones of Philip's childhood. Phrases such as "You are finishing piano practice before you leave this house," "Why don't you look through a book?" and "Sit down and draw for a while" were daily standards

Philip received his own formal training in art theory at the Brandon Arts Centre from 1978-1979. While he spent the better part of the subsequent decade working in various trades – grain elevator building and renovation, oil field trucking and cement finishing – he continued to sketch scenes from the Southern Alberta Foothills. It was not until he moved to the Fraser Valley in 1987, however, that Philip began devoting serious attention to painting under his father's patient and knowledgeable instruction. Over the course of the following ten years, Philip



Logs and Shakes, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

also married his wife, Jacquie, and welcomed his daughter, Kirsten, and son, Eric, into the world.

In 1997, Philip and his family were invited to move in with his sister and brother-in-law on Piers Island for the purpose of helping with construction work on their property. This granted Philip more time to develop his painting skills. "I will be forever thankful for that opportunity, because I was afforded plenty of time to paint the environment while I was there, and what an amazing environment it was! There were stunning shoreline strata, wind-twisted trees, varied coves and bays imbued with multi-coloured waters. Plus, these panoramas were constantly changing at the whim of the weather and the light! It was as though I'd stepped into The Pacific Coast All-You-Can-See Buffet!" Philip remembers with astonishment.

That year, he began producing coastal landscapes in oils prolifically, basing these paintings on sketches and photographs from his countless boat explorations through the Southern Inside Passage. Philip fell in love with the perspective on water and rocky shore as seen from a motorboat or canoe, and made

the decision to devote himself to landscape painting as a full-time occupation. At his wife's prodding, Philip approached a Vancouver Island art gallery with the fruits of his insatiable appetite for painting, where he was accepted and warmly welcomed by the local marketplace. Sales were immediate and regular and soon three galleries were carrying Philip's work with excellent success. "Suddenly, I was supporting my family with only the income from painting sales, which was incredibly exciting," he explains humbly.

In 2012, after years of travel throughout the Fraser Valley, northern Saskatchewan and Bayfield, Ontario, Philip and his family settled in Chilliwack, B. C. where he continues to mine inspiration from the wilderness that surrounds him. "Our home offers amazing views of mountains, all the way down to the farmland at the foot of the valley. The farms are mostly dairy, so many of the fields are sown in corn and hay. The area also has some of the most beautiful skies I have ever seen," Philip describes. "And from my studio, I have a truly breathtaking view of one of the better-known mountains in the area – Mount Cheam."



above, Moose Bay, oil on canvas, 18" x 24"

below, Shadows, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"





In Algonquin, oil on canvas, 16" x 16"



Country Roads, oil on canvas, 16" x 16"



Goal Posts, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"



A Warm Corner, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"



above, Blue Doorknob, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



right, Salty Shorelines, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"

Camping trips or days in the country also supply Philip with fresh ideas and provide the incentive necessary to keep painting. "For me, it's important to get outside and acquire a few bug bites, to be a bit cold and sometimes wet, to get dirty and smell like wood smoke, and to wind up good and hungry," he reveals. "I enjoy painting under these kinds of conditions, too, as long as it's not too windy or raining. If you look closely enough, you'll notice that many of my smaller works contain mosquitoes, seeds, bits of bark and dust. Does that qualify as multimedia art?" he teases.

All joking aside, Philip does conceive of his paintings as 'assembled constructions' as much as they are 'creations.' "Painting, for me, is like a language through which I hope to draw attention to the real beauty that surrounds me, rather than creating sources of beauty in object forms. I think the world is God-given, as are our own abilities – so that is where I lay my first credit, as far as any creative influence goes," Philip explains, "but years in the construction industry helped me to develop the necessary work ethic to stay focused and build my craft every day, whether I feel like it or not."

Philip's process for 'building' a painting typically consists of lightly sketching the general composition, including any important shapes, with a stick of willow charcoal and flicking the canvas to remove any excess charcoal dust. Next, he blocks in colour and value using oil paint that has been thinned with turpentine, before the application of pure oil paint begins. "At that point, I usually begin with the most distant elements and work my way forward. With each step, I try to improve the work, reserving details for the very end," says Philip. Once the canvas is fully covered, he revisits it one more time, adding highlights, fine points and making small changes as necessary. "At least, this is how the process goes when I'm using my brush. When using my knife, my technique is a bit different. I never use my brush and knife on the same canvas during the actual 'painting in' process," he notes.

Whether dominated by the bold and viscerally muscular strokes of his brush or palette knife, Philip's paintings all demonstrate a phenomenal use of colour and line to depict dramatic and exaggerated contours of jagged coastlines,



On Manitoulin Island, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

stormy skies, wind-whipped waters and robust woods. By capturing the natural play of light, his works also seize and reveal his private impressions of transient moments in time. Philip stresses the importance of achieving a healthy balance between intuitive freedom and artistic control while painting, since freedom allows for the release of emotion and control maintains an intelligible line of communication between the artist and the viewer. "I have always loved well-executed visual drama," Philip divulges. "I have great respect for technical expertise, an immense appreciation for the capturing of mood, and an affinity for stirring rhythm and movement in painting. If all of that is achieved with economy of strokes and bold originality – the result is a truly great painting,"

To those who wish to become great painters, Philip imparts the importance of first learning to draw, studying composition, understanding design, becoming as familiar as possible with one's tools and materials and then taking the time to practice, practice, practice. "Even if painting is only a hobby, time and honest effort are required for improvement. An auto mechanic cannot fix a car by employing interpretive dance, but rather by first having a thorough knowledge of his or

her tools and the vehicle being operated on. So too, a painter cannot paint without a working knowledge of his or her instruments and media. Emotion and inspiration alone will not produce a successful canvas. Be patient with yourself – it will come in time," he advises.

Philip also emphasizes the value of his experiences as an outdoors adventurer – navigating the rocky shorelines of the Southern Inside Passage, hiking abandoned wilderness trails in Algonquin Park, and treading softly across campgrounds to catch glimpses of wildlife prowling for food – for providing him the pleasure of profound communions and intimate engagements with nature in all its spectacular and unexpected forms. To borrow Philip's words, "Beauty doesn't always hit you in the forehead, you know? Sometimes you have to go looking for it."

To see more of Philip's work you can visit the following galleries. Full listings will be available online.

Alicat Gallery at www.alicatgallery.com

Hampton Galleries at www.hamptongalleries.com

Peninsula Gallery at www.pengal.com

White Rock Gallery at www.whiterockgallery.com



Faith, The Tallest Of The Three, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"



Shades of Orange, oil on canvas, 30" x 30"



Boulders and Bush, oil on canvas, 40" x 40"