

ESTERO MAGAZINE

On this sparkling November day the plum trees out of my window are set ablaze with the color by the slanted autumn light-cadmium green and yellow, crimson and orange laced with velvet blue-black of wet branches. The fall is a good time to write something about Nicholas Wilton's paintings. The air is full of change and everywhere we see transition.

November is the month of bounty and harvest and the time of spirit and magic. We see in the trees and fields and gardens things showing all their many faces, awake and asleep at once, between summer and winter, motion and stillness.

When I look at Nicholas's paintings as I have been for over fifteen years, I have the Autumnal feeling of seeing many worlds at one time. These works not only offer the viewer a rich visual experience, combining dynamic drawing and composition with strong, often primary, color and Nicholas's signature weather beaten surface, but invite us to take a deeper psychological journey, through his landscapes of symbols, which leads ultimately into ourselves.

Nicholas often paints animals, horses to ride, or birds in flight. These paintings are open and generously ambiguous. They invite the viewer to relate the image to his or her own life. Like reading a Tarot deck we find the image always universal enough to become quickly, intensely, personal. In one painting a floating figure, glowing with light, is surrounded by letters and fragments of words. Below stands a massive zebra enfolded in darkness. motionless, as if frozen. In this painting Nicholas's use of archetypal configurations and concepts is clearly seen. The division between the sky world of rational ideation and the subterranean abyss inhabited by animals is a body of water. This image speaks to me of the tension between these two worlds and the struggle of this person caught in the rational, unable to access the frozen animal below. Is this the artist's struggle or my own?

In many of these works struggle is depicted. In fact I believe these paintings were born of struggle, they give evidence of a fierce and honest search. The scars in their surfaces tell the story of their making and can be clearly seen. However, Nicholas always finds beauty in the struggle. He values the poetry of his broken branches and ragged edges as much as his flowers, leaves, and birds. The judgmental artist appreciating all aspects of life equally, like so many painters before him.

Most of Nicholas's paintings encourage analysis and at the same time mystify. The meaning of the image is not fixed- it is created by the viewer in the process of seeing gradually deeper into the layered image. In this sense, looking at Nicholas's paintings is a creative activity - he invites us to engage with this rich and beautiful array of elements and create our own meaning. The outcome of this activity always teaches me something about myself. On top of giving us sensual, visual enjoyment, Nicholas's paintings inspire us to examine ourselves.

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