

“Frequencies” A Show at Christine Klassen Gallery in Calgary, Alberta, Canada Fall 2018

Interview with Ulrich Panzer

by Paul Gessell for Galleries West Magazine

-- What first attracted you to the notion of paintings linked to synaesthesia?

I have been aware of the physical and emotional intensity that sensory perception can cause from an early age. The interrelations between sounds and colours felt just natural. Painting and playing instruments were like a language to me.

Later I noticed that I constantly made cross references between sound, colour and space. I found that modulating a sound to a certain depth and richness of the overtones is very similar to layering a colour until it has a specific frequency or vibration. I still say about the current paintings, ‘they are complete when I can hear them’.

--Have you done paintings which influenced our perceptions of a sense other than sound?

I do not practice painting as a scientific experiment, but I embrace the wide variety of personal responses that many viewers experience. During “The Blind Man’s Song” Show in 2015, there were several visitors with other forms of synaesthesia, colour – smell for example. Someone else walked around and gave each work a title, e.g. Rave, Lullaby, Portal.

Some people felt inclined to do Yoga exercises in the exhibition space or sat in deep contemplation in front of the paintings.

Singers and other musicians ask on a regular base if they can improvise in the presence of the works.

All of this is appropriate and very welcome, but not directly intended. I do know that my paintings can be doorways into deeper levels of “Seeing”.

--What kinds of music or chords do your paintings engender for you? Do other people "hear" other kinds of music?

The paintings can initially be inspired by certain internally perceived tone combinations, geometrical constellations, or musical fragments. The Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi for example has been such an inspiration for many years.

Yet it is essential to understand that the works neither illustrate nor translate chords or music into colour! When I paint, those references are soon left behind and the process takes on a dynamic on its own.

How a viewer responds to a painting or resonates with it is very personal. Though some people get a very clear idea of the "source" where the paintings spring from.

-- Your paintings in the Calgary show are concentric circles. Have you experimented with other kinds of paintings to encourage the link with the perception of sound?

In 2015 I began a series of drawings where such references are made. I also have a record of passable installations that involve the use of colour and light as well as sound.

In my workshops I employ various exercises where participants can experience and discover those links for themselves.

--Are you personally a person who experiences synaesthesia in other endeavours besides art?

Since I do not have any sense automatically linked to another, I am not a synaesthete from a scientific point of view.

My form of "synaesthesia" is rather conceptual and metaphorical. It can be limiting to put labels on sensitivity.