



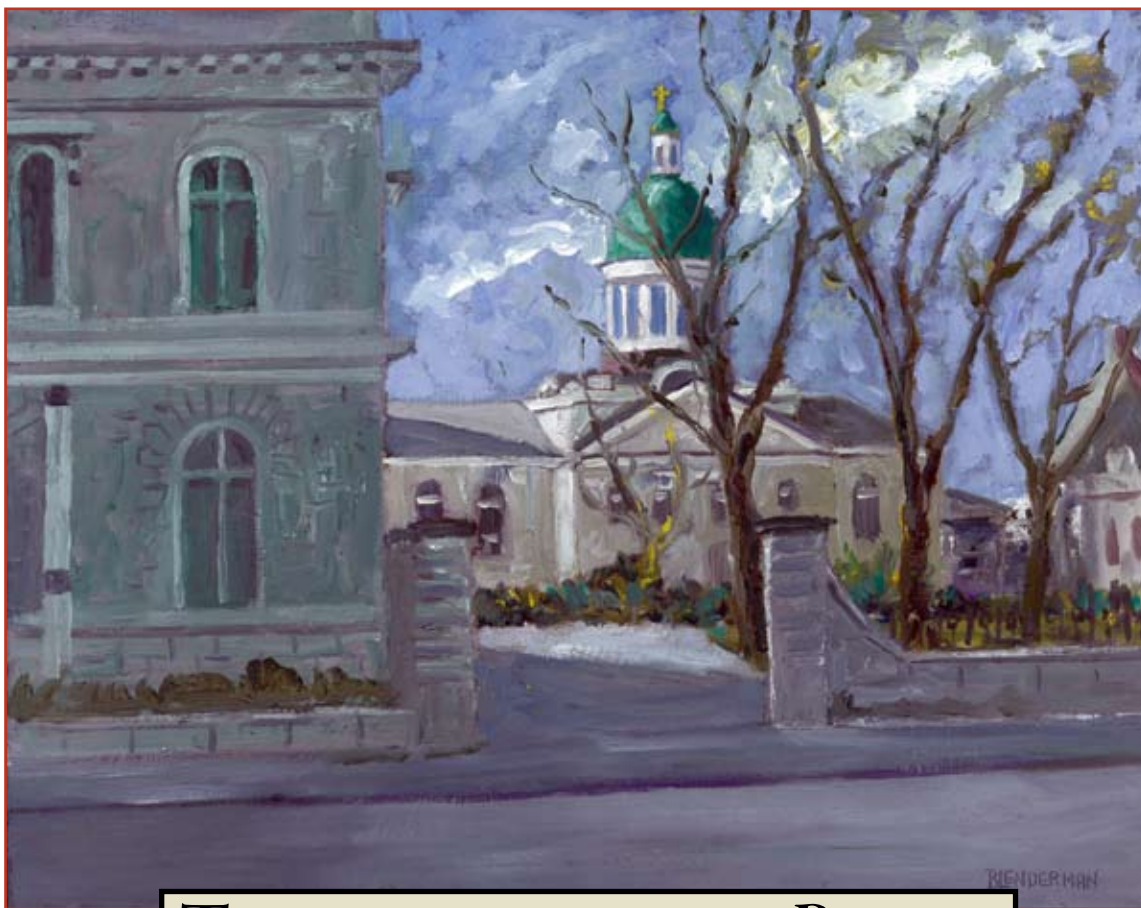
the PALIMPSEST

STUDIO 22 OPEN GALLERY

“Loafe with me on the grass”.

I HEAR ECHOES OF WALT WHITMAN AS I STROLL THROUGH THE GALLERY OF IMAGES OF BLENDERMAN’S KINGSTON CITYSCAPES. Whitman, being one of the first to sing the song of the pavement, the song of the city – of its torrents and currents, as well as its lulls, smoldering in heavy summer haze or blazing in the colors of the seasons and habits of the life it houses, of shops, markets, crowds, pushing, thrusting, an impenetrable confusion of movement expressing its virulence and lust for life.

That Whitman speaks to me as I revisit Kingston through the eyes of a local artist.



TOPOGRAPHICAL PAUSE

AN ARTICLE BY - ALEXA HALEY

(WITH PAINTINGS BY BOB BLENDERMAN)

(A DAY IN APRIL)

TOPOGRAPHICAL PAUSE

AN ARTICLE BY - ALEXA HALEY

(WITH PAINTINGS BY BOB BLENDERMAN)

(MORNING SHADOWS)

(BROCK STREET BACKYARD)

I want to begin with Whitman in order to set a tone, a pace. A pace of viewing, appreciating, lingering, loafing. *“I loaf and invite my soul, I lean and loaf at my ease ... observing a spear of summer grass.”* The artist is the supreme loafer, the supreme lingerer over the detail that is overlooked, the moment that is dispensed and dismissed, carelessly dropped into the slot marked “paid”. The artist is the one who returns to us what life, in its rush and pull, has taken from us, the connection with our world.

In Blenderman’s images that world is an endearing collage of intimate city scenes. But it is much more; it is testimony of a strong connection with a world, whose topography has left its mark on a mind and a vision, as well as a personal history. That world, the world of a small Canadian city, has its own history, which it mingles carelessly and beautifully with the private history of a man who came to it as an immigrant, an outsider and found in it a home. Blenderman returns to Cologne, his native city, with delight, savoring its aromas and rhythms, but it is Kingston he builds into a world of color and form. The countless hours spent in intimate dialogue with a familiar city scene, a wall of limestone framing, texturing a tumult of green and red, of flowers and branches weaving their fragrant presence under a jagged sky, these “conversations” speak to us as well – we, who rush by and barely notice a color or scent. It is through the eyes of such an outsider – for an artist is always that – that HOME becomes what it is – our world, our atmosphere, our element. That which we breathe and feel, which we delight in and lose ourselves in. The constant companion in whose



stories our own is threaded, brilliantly, subtly. And it is the artist who allows that mingling of voices to resonate: our own stories, the stories of the small space we inhabit, deep and rich as the lake that ruminates against the shore line. A shore line of history and sounds, of intimate scenes and obscure stories, of habitations and sufficiencies, outposts of determination and will, countless melodies, rhythms and silences. This is the stuff that weaves itself through the atmosphere, often unheard until it is fixed on a canvas, or rather embraced.

Let’s follow Bob on one of his walks, because Bob is a walker, like so many of us, breathing in the scents and colors of the streets – Wellington, Earl, Sydenham – strongholds of limestone, peonies, wild sage and garden trellises rooted in time. What do we see? Light playing across surfaces, reverberating through innumerable places of obscurity: cool brick, with a texture like stone-baked bread, bark on an oak, raising itself into the atmosphere like a wave out of a moving surface

of grey. Here the light threads itself along the elegant sweep of a stalk, a tall wispy thing you wouldn’t take much notice of except that it stands taller than a pine, moves with the grace of a gazelle and glistens like wings. There it sprints over a branch in motion, like the unexpected climax of a Mozart aria. Hundreds of leaves in motion, glistening with light, the whole world seems a branch in flight, a whirl of green and melody and air. And for one moment, we become a part of this extraordinary scene, this moment in its dynamism and intimacy.

This is what we may have the luck to observe on an amble through town, leaning, loafing and inviting our souls – if, that is, we have the luck to lose ourselves in the moment the way an artist does. If not, Bob is there to help. Bob offers a point of access, or simply echoes an experience we have learned to savor in our mature years. And Bob goes further. He gives us a feel for the textures of our world and the textures of our lives – rugged, virile, determined, steadfast, limpid, unobtrusive, disinterested, fluid, graceful. The conversations stone and brick hold with the silk of a petal – lambent light speaking to a remorseless insufficiency of grey or brown – these conversations are remarkable. They make apparent that zones of such opposing attributes enter into effortless harmony when brought into dialogue, revealing an unexpected warmth in both and revealing the dynamic energies and constellations of our own lives.

*Linger & Loafe with Bob,
Observing a Spear of Summer Grass!*

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