

SHARON BARR



As though made up of something cosmic, each of Sharon Barr's paintings seems to have a kind of gravitational pull. Paint strokes are energized as they travel over the composition: some are quick bursts, while others build slowly to a rich intensity of colour and form, orbiting a center in a mesmerizing dance, harmonious yet wandering. And while Barr's paintings are abstract by definition, they also draw on our recognition of familiar scenes: one sees a busy promenade, a garden bouquet, a poem, and a musical score all at once on a single canvas. It is this ability of paint to activate recognition in the viewer that underpins Barr's understanding of her work as existing both within and beyond the landscape genre. But the "places" that inspire her dissolve quickly into "spaces" for the eye to wander; each work begins not with an objective, but with an attitude of nomadic exploration. This attitude connects Barr's practice to so much more than paint: Eastern philosophy, poetry, and meditation are essential to the artist's approach, with each emphasizing the belief that physical forms and abstract thought are not opposites, but sisters. Painting, in turn, is a unifying gesture for Barr, one that attempts to reconcile—if only for a moment—the flurry of elements around us, from the organic to the spiritual. "These paintings are self-portraits...reflective of our own image," says Barr, who believes that "...the bonds between animal and plant are vital, but the connection is deeper than sustenance. The earth is our body; its water, our fluids. Each painting is a silent visual poem to nature."

Sharon Barr's paintings have been exhibited across Canada and collected internationally, with notable collectors including The City of Toronto, Mount Sinai Hospital, and the Ministry of Ontario. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Canadian Living*, *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, *Blank Spaces*, and *Style at Home*. Barr is represented by Canvas Gallery (Toronto), Galerie Bloom (Montreal), and In 2 Art Gallery (Oakville). She lives and works from her studio in Toronto.

by E. Saunders

