

YELLOW LIGHT



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# The Stories We Tell

the words we don't see

*Theresa Eisenbarth,  
Visual Storyteller*

***The day is August 23rd and it's a hot, dry day in the southern prairies of Alberta.*** Theresa's uncle has a youthful glow upon his face as he tells stories of what life was like growing up in his time. The rustling breeze in the tall grass nearby offers a soothing backdrop to his voice, but before his words get whisked away with the strong prairie wind, Theresa soaks them up into her paintbrush.

Growing up in a rural, western town, Theresa's roots stem deep into this part of the country. Fear of losing years of memories is what motivates her to document the stories of her past, her ancestors and the land. These are stories we all can relate to and sadly, stories that may one day, be lost forever.

**BUT THERESA WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN.** A visual storyteller of her time, she takes these stories and re-creates them with the help of everyday, household ingredients such as coffee, tinfoil, string, paper and newspaper text. The use of these familiar, household ingredients in her paintings creates an interesting landscape on which the stories can be told.

LOTTIE'S HIDDEN GEM | DETAIL



**THERESA EXPLORES THE SUBJECT MATTER PRIOR TO CREATING ANYTHING**, documenting all angles with the help of her handy camera. It is the details she discovers within the subject matter that will essentially dictate which ingredients she uses to create the piece. For example, in her Two Views series – a group of paintings of period buildings in Medicine Hat – she uses a copper penny finish as the base to these works.

*“I simply want to capture nuances of building structures before they disappear or change. I still remember some of the beautiful period buildings we walked by when I was a child that have now been torn down and replaced. Although many of the exteriors have been modified, the doors have retained their historical appeal. The use of a copper penny faux finish as an under-painting represents the sense of transition in a small western downtown: a weathering of the past years to a new, modern era. The backgrounds remind me of the years when the penny was actual currency that translated into a candy purchase at the corner store. And now, the actual penny is joining penny candy as it drifts into a memory.”*

Each painting focuses on a threshold or an architectural aspect of the building with a strong graphic black line. This style, coupled with copper backgrounds defines the architectural structure, simplifying the visual impact. It's this result that reminds Theresa of a simpler life.



***Theresa has spent several years developing her loose style and art-making process.*** THERE IS A FORM OF ABSTRACTION TO HER WORK THAT IS HIGHLY TEXTURED AND ALMOST SCULPTURAL. The artwork portrays the flow of a subject: whether a flower, tree or moving grasses in the prairies. There is a sense of life and movement in her pieces, as well as a certain artistic energy that leaves us wanting more. Her use of vivid, bold colours, interesting textures and a strong, graphic black line are what sets Eisenbarth apart. But those aren't the only common elements you'll find threaded throughout her work...

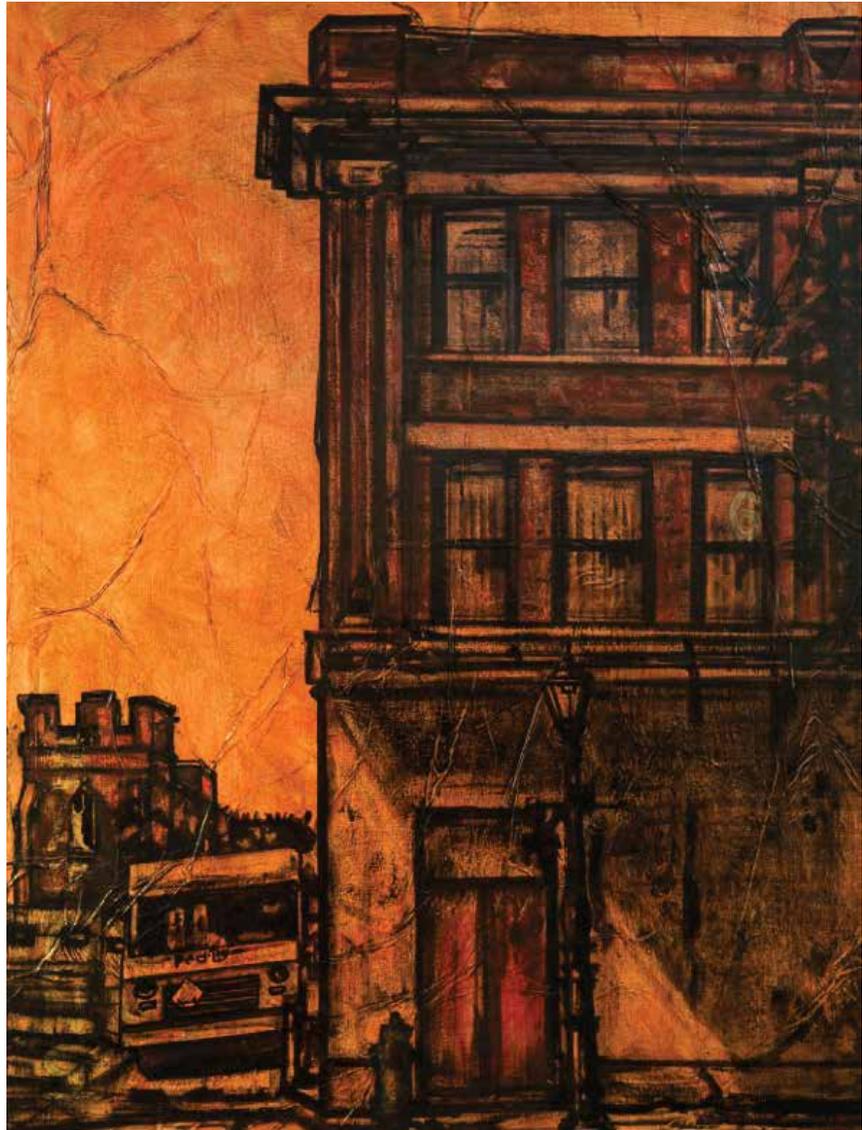
**NATURE PLAYS A BIG ROLE IN THERESA'S LIFE** and she incorporates natural elements into many of her pieces. Take her Poppy and Birch series for instance, she focuses on close up details that one may normally miss.

*"I start with building a foundation on birch panel, layering paint and a variety of thickly applied mediums and household textures. These alternate with paint glazes to build a sculptured image. There's a push-pull to my images. I like the surprises that present themselves when one layer speaks to the other and reveals something I never considered about the subject matter. I continue with the large shapes as if adding to a puzzle. A pattern gradually emerges and the puzzle melds like glue with pieces of vibrant color, rhythm and texture. These non-traditional techniques bring a large variety to my artwork and allow me to freely express the ebb and flow of nature."*

MEMORIES OF WWII | POPPY AND BIRCH SERIES



**IN ADDITION TO USING NATURAL TEXTURES THROUGHOUT,** Theresa moulds each individual poppy by hand using tissue paper and string or gel for the stems. Once secure and perfectly in place she highlights with a thin layer of acrylic paint.



**SIMILARLY, IN HER ABSTRACT DOOR SERIES, SHE INTEGRATES ACTUAL HARDWARE** into each piece that in a way, make the doors seem and feel real. It's these doors that, for Theresa, represent a spiritual journey. There is a certain mystery behind the symbolism of a door that is associated with the unknown, the future. What's behind them? Where do they lead? It's this mystery that has us entranced, and because every one of us has our own, individual interpretation of where each door may take us, it gives this series a certain power that resonates with all of us.



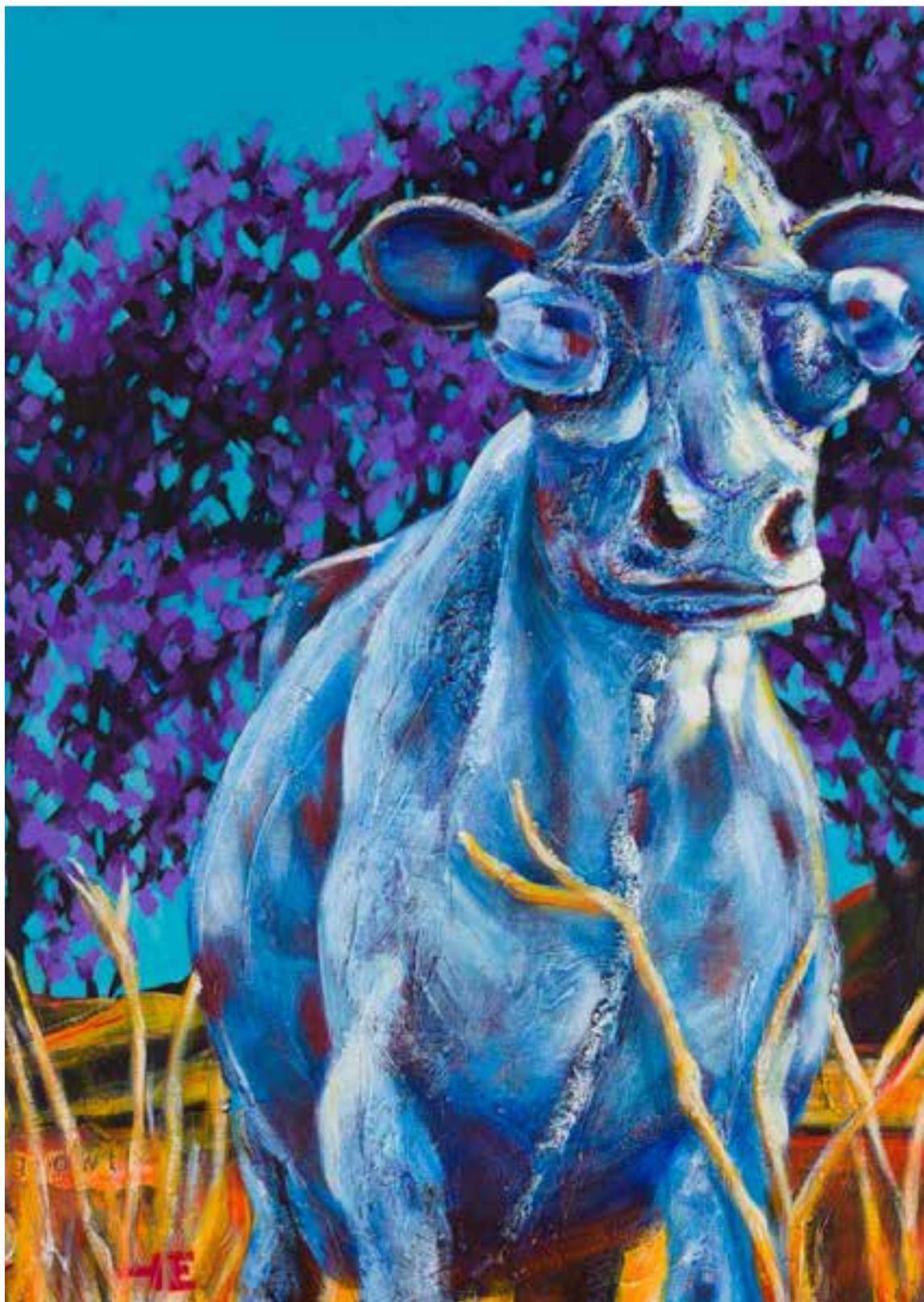
***Seeing the beauty in common subjects that often go unnoticed, is what fuels Theresa's passion for painting.***

People walk or drive by things 100 times a day without really taking the time to see, or look for the story behind the subject. The success of a painting is when patterns, pure color and a multitude of mark-making collide and invite the viewer to take a second look, seeing the stories the subject has to offer. Theresa brings them to life and tells the story in a visual way so we can all see it.

But no matter the subject, there is a connection or story that runs a lot deeper than the idea of it being just a pretty picture. Each piece Theresa creates is her way of documenting a part of her life whether past or present, and there's one common ingredient to all of it... Words.

**EVERY YEAR THERESA SELECTS ONE WORD** to focus on. This word represents the potential direction for her art and acts as a mantra she can focus on in life. Whatever that word may be, it will summarize the reasoning behind her decisions and her work for that entire year.

Theresa incorporates this chosen word into every piece of her work. It's these words that represent a sense of transition with Theresa and act as her own time-stamp. Instead of the usual signature and date, it is with these words, sometimes legible and sometimes hidden, that Theresa documents specific times in her life.



**SIMULTANEOUSLY, THERESA WILL SELECT ANOTHER WORD.** But this is one she will practice letting go of while she moves forward with her new intention based on the word of the year she has chosen.

*“The word connection parallel's an experience of growing up in a western rural setting and interplay's the time era of a small town childhood and long forgotten memories interwoven into each piece. The incorporation of these elements represents a sense of transition for me. It is essentially a need to record now and leave a mark of where I've been.”*

ASPEN TREES | POPPY AND BIRCH SERIES



**FOR ANY ARTIST, LEAVING YOUR MARK IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE PROCESS.** The way in which Theresa leaves hers, holds a lot more meaning. It is her very own stamp representing a specific time in her life and a time of growth.

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