

SUSAN AVISHAI

BIOGRAPHY

Her creative life began the night her father's ballpoint pen dropped from his pocket as he bent over to tuck her in. She was two years old, the sheet her canvas, and the experience heady.

Growing up in Montreal in the 1950's, Susan had the great good fortune to spend Saturday mornings making art with Arthur Lismer at the Musee des Beaux Arts. Few teachers taught joy as he did. At eighteen she was footloose at the Academie Julien in Paris, drawing the nude model while sitting on the same benches once warmed by the back-ends of Gauguin and Rodin, deciding that yes, she was inexorably hooked. Nothing seemed to compare with the magic and power of making life appear on a sheet of paper.

Susan returned to Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) in Montreal to complete a BFA (1971). This was a time of upheaval in the art world. Hard edge and colour field painters challenged realists like Susan to think very differently about space, surface, the world as reference, even about paint itself. She studied with Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, Alfred Pinsky, then at OCA in Toronto, with Dennis Burton's collection of practicing artist/teachers, among them Arthur Handy, James Boyd, Graham Coughtry, Hugh Mackenzie and Gordon Rayner. But interestingly it is only now in her 50's that she feels she is beginning to understand and embrace what she resisted then.

Susan married and raised children in Jerusalem, then New York, eventually settling in Boston. During those years her prints and drawings were both reflective of a sense of foreignness and isolation, and a sanctum from the disruptions of moving and change and the responsibility of small children. She began a series of silverpoints of lingerie and unmade beds, pale and intricate drawings which Ghitta called her whispering. In time her fascination with fabric and how it drapes on the human form became a twenty-year study Susan calls Scapes of the Clothed Figure. These drawings and paintings, volume pumped up, were shown in solo and juried exhibitions in the U.S., and Canada.

Concurrently, Susan ran a freelance illustration business during the twenty-five years she lived in Boston. Well over a dozen children's picture books were published using her illustrations, and she worked for magazines and educational publishing. In 2001 she returned to school for a Master of Arts in English and Creative Writing at Hollins University in Virginia. There, between writing seminars, Susan escaped to the studios and painted under the brilliant tutelage of William G. White.

Susan Avashi returned to Canada in 2005, first to Ottawa and now lives in Toronto. And after several decades of a nearly photorealistic approach she sees a huge leap in scale and concept in her recent drawings and paintings. She believes they now invite more dialogue. They convey a messier worldview, an acceptance of mistakes and complexity, a willingness to go for the new that she feels she may have feared and pushed away earlier in her life. The new abstract paintings are stronger statements of her weaknesses, ironically. They are also incredibly more engaging to create.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 New Abstraction, Petroff Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2008 Soul of the Machine, TYPE Bookstore gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2007 On the Line, Ottawa School of Art Showcase, Ottawa, ON
- 2006 Unbuttoned, Atrium Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2004 Faces of Wellesley, Wellesley Free Library, Wellesley, MA
- 2003 Unbuttoned, Perspective Gallery, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
- 2001 Ci'-vis: Portraits of Newton, Newton Free Library, Newton MA





-
- 1995 Prints and Drawings, Lighthouse Gallery, Tequesta, Florida
 - 1993 New Drawings, Newton Public Library, Newton, Massachusetts
 - 1982 Silverpoint Drawings, Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA
 - 1979 Prints and Drawings, The Artists' House, Jerusalem, Israel

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 Spring Forward, Petroff Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2007 The Underwood Series, IPO Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2007 Montreal International Festival en Arts, Montreal, QC
- 2006 Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Toronto, ON
- 2006 Drawing 2007, John B. Aird Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2006 24th Annual Portrait Show, Francesca Anderson Fine Art, Lexington, MA
- 2006 Faces of Boston, Boston City Hall, Boston MA
- 2006 23rd Annual Portrait Show, Francesca Anderson Fine Art, Lexington, MA
- 2005 22nd Annual Portrait Show, Francesca Anderson Fine Art, Lexington, MA
- 2002 Diversity in White, Studios on the Square, Roanoke, Virginia, First Place
- 2001 18th Annual Portrait Show, Francesca Anderson Fine Art, Lexington, MA
- 2000 Solitudes, Lyman Eyer Gallery, Newton Massachusetts
- 1999 Equinox, Randolph Associates Fine Art, Belmont, Massachusetts
- 1998 Two Coasts/Four Visions, Horn Gallery, Babson College, Wellesley, MA
- 1998 The Male Image, Fowler Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts
- 1996 International Colored Pencil Society Exhibition, San Diego, California
- 1996 Women in the Visual Arts/96, Erector Square Gallery, New Haven, CT
- 1995 The Drawing Show, Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA
- 1995 Three Figurative Painters, Andrea Marquit Fine Arts, Boston MA
- 1992 Two Women, Francesca Anderson Fine Art, Lexington, Massachusetts