

Shelley Freedman

Amalgam Series: The Creative Process

The amalgam series looks at the juxtaposition of manicured nature and manmade structures. The works contain familiar elements combined in unexpected ways. In the formal sense, an amalgam is defined as the substance formed by the reaction of some other substance with mercury¹. It is also defined as a: combination, compound, blend, union, composite, fusion, alloy, meld, or admixture². A river of words for a magical process.

For me, it is a fusion of my digital and physical worlds. It satisfies my curiosity and wonder about how our lives are shaped by technology and an ever growing addiction to bandwidth. Unplug us and see how twitchy we get; it is only a matter of days, or hours for some. I use my own images, digital photographs, manipulating them to create a composite, or collage. These collages serve as a study and finished product in their own right. Moreover, they provide the starting composition for the painting that will be created on canvas. The painting then develops its own spirit, coming to life with each brush stroke.

Step out the front door and head to street level where a residential structure meets a sliver of garden. Or maybe it's the path from the parking lot to a workplace. Look for that bedraggled bit of Nature, buildings next to railroad tracks, or abandoned lots. These isolated specimens have intrigued me for years; what kind of history lies beneath the surface?

I attended a talk by John Atkin, civic historian and author on the history of Vancouver's landscape and how little, if any of the original landscape remains. Instead, it is a city that is planned to a large degree, so that whole swathes of older, underused buildings are replaced.

Paradoxically, we sometimes fight to preserve an artificial landscape, where many plants and trees species are imports from elsewhere. The vegetation in the Vancouver area was originally temperate rain forest; Douglas fir, Western red cedar and Western hemlock with scattered pockets of maple and alder and large areas of swampland, even in upland areas, due to poor drainage³. It used to be a symbol of prosperity to transplant an England garden in its place. I think it still is.

Sources:

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalgam_%28chemistry%29

2 Collins Thesaurus of the English Language – Complete and Unabridged 2nd Edition. 2002 © HarperCollins Publishers 1995, 2002

3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vancouver#Early_growth