

OPTIMIST IN FIVE TIMES

This is Optimist.

Optimist?

This is Optimist,

A painting created by Takao Tanabe

Takao

Takao

Tanabe

In 1964

1964?

'64.

I am oil on canvas and measure about

71 by 124 centimetres,

Or 28 by 49 inches.

I am a rectangle. On a wide rectangle (as opposed to vertical, on the horizontal).

I'm a painting of striking colour.

It almost looks like a collage. Of different shapes.

The left side of me looks really kind of cool tones, lemon yellow.

Then the right side is a more warm yellow tone.

And in the centre, I also have this big red...object [laughs] that can look like a mitt?

Like a hand in glove.

It could also be a lobster claw?

Looks like a very red face.

Or it could be a head,

With a round, hair-like shape;

A golden sun, sort of, in the background.

And the sun is like this dirty, dirty kind of colour of yellow.

I would almost think that I look like a religious painting

because of the yellow ochre orb, or corona, around the red centrepiece.

The other thing is this yellow split [or] line,
A split down one side,
Which creates a thumb-like [shape]...a thumb or a lobster claw.

I am also an animal looking up to the sky...I am also a field of red poppies, surrounded by wheat.

My entire surface is somewhat textured with really broad but yet somehow subtle brushwork.

It's not smooth.

The yellow is smoother, and the red and gold are more rough.

I want to make note of the frame. It's a very simple, thin black frame that's slightly scuffed up and a little bit damaged.

I'm not actually sure what happened to me during all those years living by myself or just being stored in a collection space.

I feel like there's more to me than meets the eye, I feel like I've had a past, I've been in more than one place. I've been somewhere where I've been... just maybe not treated really delicately. I've maybe been through a little bit before coming...here.

That's what fascinates. An abstract expressionism

painting—it opens questions, it brings your attention to things that you otherwise find mundane, and it asks you, or it helps you ask questions about actually what happens there.

I feel like I'm speaking really loudly, but at the same time softly. I don't know. I feel like I'm trying to explore colours and contrast and bold lines, flat planes of colour...

I think, as many of my friends and contemporaries, we tend to be a little bit hard to understand or to be understood.

...And I'm trying to really get people's attention in a really bold way, but at the same time, very subtly. I feel like it's all about contradictions in some kind of way.

I wish for people to, when they see me, think of different textures and shapes.

I think I wish that people would look closer at me. I wish people would look closer,
And look at me in relation to what's happening in the art world.

I want people to feel.

I want to keep battling against the world until the day I eventually pass away and the Mother Nature takes me.

I feel like my name kind of contradicts the bold and kind of fiery colours in me.

I think that just the yellow, yellow is a really...and red—these are...optimistic colours, I think.

My palette is more vibrant and red and fiery, and almost a little bit angry.

My name can be a burden to some extent.

It really suits me.

It kind of forces me...well, it encourages me on one hand but also forces me to live a way that seems to, you know, satisfy to my name.

It's a name...that...I can relate to. I like that name. I like to keep that name [laughs]. Yeah.

And I find it so burdensome because sometimes you just have to embrace, there are darker moments of your life.

And it's a sense of stability that comes through, so I think people will feel calmness...and sort of this balance.

Very calming, very peaceful. Even with that red.

I'm not here to tell people about my story. I'm here to remind me of a story of their own, of how they view the world, of how they carry out their own lives.

I like it. I like myself [laughs]...I like myself [more laughter].

VOICES:

Red: A strong, mid-range voice with an East Asian accent

Warm yellow: A soft, mid-range, somewhat halting voice with an Ontario accent

Yellow ochre: A confident, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Black: A higher pitched, very soft voice with an Ontario accent

Dark red: A mid-range voice with a Polish accent

PHTHALO BLUE IN FIVE TIMES

I'm Phthalo Blue,

I'm Phthalo Blue,

A painting created by Gershon

Gershon

Iskowitz

Iskowitz

In 1977

In 1977.

I am oil on canvas and measure about

181 by 201 centimetres,

Or 71 by 79 inches.

I am very large.

People often mention my sense of balance.

I look kind of magical from whatever way you look at me.

I am constructed of a white background and two large blue pieces.

Blue islands in a big sea of white.

And they seem to be going off me. They kind of disappear off the earth.

These large blue pieces, one comes from the upper right almost to the centre, the other comes from maybe the central half on the left side. And both of them move close to the centre.

They're kind of right next to each other.

When we talk about these blue shapes, they are not polygons. These shapes are irregular, as if they're torn out

of tissue paper.

On the right side, upper right, I have a big blue island that kind of looks like a face,

A lion's head,

With a profile, and a nose, and lips, and a chin, and a beard that drips down into the water.

The one on the left, it is also coming from somewhere off the painting.

It looks like it just got separated. There's some sort of Pangaea thing happening here. And it also drips down a little bit at the bottom,

Somewhat reminiscent of a map of Greenland or the South of Africa. They might think that the two blue are faces of people or animals who are trying to kiss one another or pulling back from kissing,

As if it were a child leaving.

You may have an impression about me based on a snapshot of me at one particular moment. I'm not sure how I look. Sometimes I question that.

I feel like I look like a little piece of land going between two pieces of water.

The Antarctic with two oceans.

It isn't normal to think about blue as continents and white as the ocean.

Well...it looks like in between what some people think are the oceans, if they think the oceans are land, then it looks like there is a river in between.

But it does look like the white is a kind of an ocean around these two blue islands or peninsulas.

And the river would be frozen over because it's all white. And it looks like there's a bit of water that's underneath that you can't really see it because it's so thick.

This white background is spotted with a deeper white or a thicker white. And then,

I have lots of coloured spots on me,

An assortment of brush strokes,

Nuances of tone and colour,

Little reflections from the sun showing little rainbow colours,

Confetti falling on top.

Big, like a four-inch wide brush or small, like a two-inch or one-inch wide brush.

Blue, and bluish-white, and kind of orangish-red...

These are seemingly randomly splashed about my body.

...And the colour of a banana peel...

Enough that it's sincerely spotted.

...Sky blue, and the colour of grass, and there's dark blue as well.

But when I think about that traditional Krakow hat, I see these reflections in terms of the brush strokes.

It kind of looks like you're looking at me from the top, like you're sitting on a cloud looking down on top of me and throwing confetti down.

I see myself as a lot of things, but in another way I don't see myself as those things.

I would like to say that I'm very happy.

I definitely feel broken.

That I came here perhaps confused,

Wanting to be mellow, but having all these fiery patches all over me that just kind of break that up.

But with a message of love and caring with happy primary colours and happy motions toward, if the blues are friendly to one another or, indeed, lovers.

I almost feel like I wish to be attached with that other piece of land again. I almost feel like I'm trying to suck it back in, as opposed to pushing it away.

I think different thoughts. Like it would be nice if people could look at me and see whatever they were looking for...in me. Rather than me being something, I'd like them to be able to look and see all different kinds of things.

I wish that people didn't have to be...separated.

That there were balloons to go with the confetti because it would look more like a party then.

I think my story would be one of maybe connection, or things, people reaching out to each other, or passageways through.

In this painting, I display the reds, and the blues, and the yellows, and the greens are all living near each other mixed in together, happy.

I remind people of a bridge, like a bridge between different bases, and different places, and situations, and ideas. I'm like a link.

And it's okay if we don't have round edges or straight corners. We can all work together if we want to.

I don't always think about it, but in this situation I'm being asked to describe it, I'm noticing that more and more right now.

As a painting, it'd be interesting for me to see what other people thought of me, because obviously I think things, just like a person would, of who they are. But to hear what other people think of you is pretty enlightening. It's surprising, or comforting, or upsetting. So, it'd be interesting to hear what other people...thought of me.

Antarctica, but Antarctica that was, like, fun. Where people could live and it wasn't cold all the time.

VOICES:

Phthalo blue: A confident, thoughtfully paced, mid-range voice with a US accent

Banana peel: A deep, pensive voice with an Ontario accent

White: A mid-range voice with an Ontario accent and occasional vocal fry

Grass: A soft, breathy, higher-pitched voice of a young person with an Ontario accent

Orangish-red: A soft, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

ST IVES IN SIX TIMES

[Clearing throat] I'm St. Ives.

I'm St. Ives.

St. Ives.

A painting made by Jack Bush.

Jack Bush.

In 1962.

1962.

I am oil on canvas,

And I'm about 233 centimetres tall, and 178 centimetres wide, or 92 by 70 inches.

What do I look like?

Oh [said as sighing], I am large.

I look like a big rectangle.

I'm more tall than I am wide.

About the size of a double bed.

I have four corners, and I'm beautiful.

I appear as a very simple painting. I'm a rather flat painting,

Divided into two general parts, vertically.

I am blue on one side. On my right side.

Almost royal blue.

Dark blue. Not quite navy.

A navy blue. Would you call that a navy blue? I would call that

a navy blue. Yeah.

Relatively solid blue,

But it's a bit, very softly kind of patchy,

With some very subtle variations.

And the other side of me.

To the left.

Is more dynamic with a great deal of...tension.

This mustard yellow on the other side,

An ochre,

Is very mottled.

That yellow colour reminds me of the middle layer of the ground.

Then I've got these little...fingers that are coming from off screen,

Stripes,

Lines of intrusion, almost,

On the bottom left side,

Three sets of stripes,

Two in each set.

Red, and, like, a hunter green?

That run at a diagonal.

Kind of horizontal, but moving upwards.

About, maybe...twenty-three degrees to horizontal?

That look like carrot and cucumbers.

They look like rainbow carrots to me.

Often times people have a more bodily experience of them as ribs?

Where my blue side meets my ochre side, is...a shoreline,

A big, tall tree,

A long neck,

A nighttime sky,
A very calm shoreline,
At a beach.

Where the water has no ripples, and the sand has no
footprints.

Now, One doesn't typically see water this blue. But...it's
still a shoreline.

It's not really going straight down the middle. It is veering
off to the right.

Right at the top of me, where the blue meets the ochre
side
of me,

There's a little bit of white.

It's not a complete meeting. There's a slight split where
again you see some of the primed canvas.

At the top middle. It almost looks like it's right in the
middle.

That little bit is clearly intentional. And, I think it's just a
reminder. It's a reminder, that...I'm a painting.

These lines of force that are entering are very thick.
They're, I don't know, three or four inches wide.

The top set of stripes is pretty...I don't know what to say,
normal. It's just they are hand painted, so it's not a straight
edge.

They're not geometrically accurate,
Got a bit of trammel in it.

They're very roughly drawn on me.

I have what is perceived as to be a unfinished piece of me.

A very slight separation between the red stripe and the lower stripe, which is a dark green.

A very slim sliver of white between them.

It should appear as raw canvas or primed canvas.

Which gives them a life of their own, really. They have a different background than the background that they intrude upon.

The middle one, the middle set is longer, moving almost right to my blue side.

The one in the middle is a little bit more worked at?

There's a bit of the green of the tip of that particular stripe that moves into the red.

It looks like somebody was trying to scrape some of the green upward.

A little bit more animated than the one at the top.

They make you wonder why they're there.

I mean, if I were to characterize these stripes as personalities, the bottom set would be kind of exhausted, or a little bit more lugubrious. It feels fatter, it's a bit curved,

it's a bit cumbersome. There's some staining of the green into the sand.

They seem to be there without me having any choice. And

they do intrude upon a very otherwise delicate, although divided, backdrop.

If I focus on my right side, I am at peace. If I focus on my left side, I am force and tension.

I wonder why the blue side is so much more uniform than the yellow side. Part of me wants the blue to completely take over, so it can be very smooth, all across. But then part of me wants...nothing. I think part of me is okay.

Although there's the tension there, there is also a resolution. Because the tension from one side, pointing to this very quiet and soft other side, is...bringing that softer side alive. By showing a dichotomy.

Well...my name is a place by the sea.

I don't know that Jack ever went to St. Ives. So, I'm not sure why he called me that.

There's a semi-famous nursery rhyme about wives, and cats, and kits.

I...like my name. I think it's a cool name, and I think it represents my giant-ness, being called St. Ives.

It's also the name of a brand of face wash.

And I have grown into that name without knowing what it means. But it is me, and I accept it as me.

I don't think that the colours match what I think of as St. Ives. But who knows. Maybe if somebody from St. Ives saw me, they'd be like, oh, you remind me of my home.

I want to be the centre. The centre of energy. I have a majestic strength within me.

What do I think Jack intended? I think that was just the line he decided to do that day. That's the line his body made.

And to the degree that I have described myself to you, I know what I am. But there is another degree, that I simply do not know what I am. And I am always looking to more closely, more accurately, define what I am.

One would always look at me, looking for more meaning. And wanting to believe that every, you know, slight mark is intentional. And yet, maybe that's not really the case.

Those are just the marks his body made that day. And of course the marks that the paint made.

I think that in this particular gallery, I'm not...the most eye-catching. I'm big, but so are the other ones around me. And I think the other ones have a lot going for it. And I guess I shouldn't compare myself to others, but I always feel very drab.

But if you just focus on me, I think I have a lot to offer. Yeah, I have a lot to offer.

The sky is like outer space, but it's a little bit closer than outer space. And the sky is full of clouds. But not in this picture. There's no room for clouds in this picture. So, and...I can't think any more unless you make me think about anything else. Well, that is all!

VOICES:

Green text: A pensive, often pausing, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Cream text: A deep, somewhat gravely, intermittently pausing, thoughtful voice with an Ontario accent

Mustard yellow text A soft, calming, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Black text: A confident, deep, voice with an Ontario accent

Light blue text: A breathy voice of a young child with an Ontario accent.

Red text: A strong mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

SUMMIT MEETING IN FIVE TIMES

This is Summit Meeting.

Summit...Meeting.

This is Summit Meeting,

By Harold Town.

A mixed media painting made by Harold Town in 1961.
1961.

I am 190 by 211 centimetres, or 75 by 83 inches.

The piece that he created, that is me...

I'm a very forceful presence.

I'm a very large painting, almost perfectly square.

On me you will find two irregular figures, and they seem to be facing each other.

It's kind of like two cliffs trying to join together, but aren't quite there. Or they were split apart...

I guess it depends on how you look at this, but I feel that the background is white, with two very large black...pieces split by the white.

...And are trying to regroup again.

It's hard to say if... If they could get together, they're definitely divided, and

I guess you could look at this differently and look at it as to the background being black, but I actually think I'm the reverse.

I have shapes inside of these black shapes.

Each black shape is interrupted by a square.

Squares of...

Yellow and red,

And dark greenish.

And then he pops the orange.

Brilliant colours and square shapes that are in the midst of these circles.

A thin grey circle.

The circles are almost invisible though, and they slowly disappear into the black as you move around the circle.

And these circles could be for eye-type shapes, but they also could be some kind of target.

A third and smaller red square outline almost intersects both shapes. Half of it is on the left figure, the other half is on the right figure.

And you kind of wonder, what is this all about?

It looks as though there are two figures arguing and they're close to coming to an agreement. And when they agree...the middle white line, which is part of the background, will disappear; the black figures will join together; and the square at the centre, which now is in half, will become whole.

There's no central emotion in my life. It's often shifting but

seems for the most part that it's either really happy or really sad.

The white brings out the happy, but the black brings out the sad, and then the squares and the blue bring out kind of both mixed together.

I feel like I'm in an impossible situation...I'm not sure that I can join with myself, even though the shape that I am implies that I should be together.

They seem like they want to join together but are kind of... aren't quite there.

I also wish that I was not as disjointed as I feel. So, there's a lot of strange angular portions of me that feel very jagged and rough, and I wish I was smoothed out a little around the edges.

The fact that artist Harold Town named me Summit Meeting must have some significance.

It represents everybody's different points of view.

Summit Meeting to me implies...people getting together in an attempt to work out an issue. It also implies a lot of different opinions, and usually these opinions imply discord. It doesn't have to, but it often does. So, I would say that I am trying to represent that view of the discord that occurs when many people get together with different

opinions.

We're all trying to figure out which one's best.

And I'm representing how difficult it is to cross that barrier into unity with one another, and even to reshape my whole design into something that brings delight.

It's great to be on a wall. It's great to be seen, knowing that you've been sitting in the vault for [laughter]... I think for a while.

VOICES:

Red: A confident, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

White: A soft, at times halting, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Grey: A younger, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Yellow-orange: A soft, young voice with an Ontario accent

Orange: A halting, soft voice with an Ontario accent

TIRADE IN FOUR TIMES

This is Tirade.

This. Is. Tirade.

This is Tirade, a painting by Harold Feast.

Feist!

A painting by Harold...

By Harold Feist,

Created in 1977. I am acrylic on canvas,

And measure 172 by 340 centimetres, or 68 by 134 inches.

I'm a very large painting and it is a panoramic view, so I am more wide than I am tall.

On my canvas you will see approximately 20 vertical brush strokes of a variety of colours such as yellow, grey, watermelon red, and blue.

I am pink, and yellow, green, and blue, and red.

They're very soft colours.

There's a light red and a dark red.

And I...am in pastels, so I look like...eggshells?

The lines are very interesting in that the centre line is relatively straight, but the lines that radiate out from there: towards the left, they bend to the left, the ones to the right, bend gently to the right. They do work together, although each line has its own personality. There is not one line that is the same as another line.

I seem to...go like ripples on water into the centre of the painting before spreading out into the sides.

Hmm...I guess I look kind of like rays of sunshine if you could see them?

And I am very large.

I also looked just like a spring day, mostly.

My canvas paper is coming down a little bit. At the corners you can see it's wrinkled and sagging down at the bottom. It's very slow and it's not like I'm old and withering. It's...just a little bit falling down.

I feel very...very...a more shy, laid-back painting.

I'm very serene and gentle. There's not a lot of heat or particular coldness. It's just soft...

I'm not meant to shock or to stun people by what I am revealing about myself.

I'm just going with the flow kind of...yeah.

Overall, I give the impression of tension and impatience. I am certainly not a neat painting. I have cracks on my canvas. There are textures, like some places the paint is thicker than in other areas. I am not a neat painting.

I want people to hear that I am trying to get attention, but I'm not very good at it.

I don't think my name really fits.

I think the title, Tirade, suits me well.

Because my colours are very calm. There's no heat or black or red or darkness or any of that. It's all muted tones like grey and mixed together...

The painter, Harold Feist, did not create beautiful vertical lines all in a row, all uniform. They seem to be painted in anger and quickly, and there's a variety of textures. It's uneven, there's tension.

There's...there's not a lot of passion.

There seems to be some strife going on here between the lines. I am definitely not a painting that you would look at to relax.

I would say that I want people, when they look at me, to relax and to enjoy the large display that I have before me.

I need to be placed in a large room with a lot of space around me and I need to be appreciated for what I am. I am not considered a beautiful painting, however, I do have things to say to people that view me.

I look kind of like it would look if someone was brushing someone else's hair or their own hair. It's very smooth. And it feels nice [laughs].

VOICES:

Watermelon red: A confident, mid-range voice with an Ontario accent

Yellow: A soft, higher pitched, somewhat hesitant voice with an Ontario accent

Green: A higher pitched voice with an Ontario accent

Grey-blue: A deep voice with an Ontario accent

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A piece of cloth, held taut is project by Aislinn Thomas with Community Description provided by many generous volunteers.

Optimist in five times is voiced by:

AURA, I like art.

CANDICE LEYLAND, I'm a watercolour artist and teacher in Kitchener-Waterloo. I've been here about 10 years and I've been an active working artist for about 3 years.

So, my name is KAROLINE VARIN. I'm a visual artist but I currently also work as a cultural worker. I work in Arts and Culture Administration for the City of Kitchener and I guess I'm also still an educator. That is something I've been doing for the past, I would say, 10 years. I'm also a mother. Those are the key functions of myself [laughs].

My name is PAULA ROSTRUP and I live in Waterloo. I'm a printmaker in Waterloo. I help out at the Button Factory at the open studio—I'm the technician for that day, but I am a printmaker. I was born and raised in Toronto and actually my father was an architect but he was also a watercolour artist. So we grew up in a very artistic and musical family. My grandmother—his mother—was a singer [laughs], but she sang ballads and she played the harp. So I'm only really realizing this now in talking to people how different that was from other people I know, how they grew up. It's just the way we were. So people like Harold Town was really big in Toronto, and we just knew about that. And being 65 years of age I also went through that period of time—the 60s and 70s, the 80s and on.

This is YEXIN TAN I'm an arts supporter in this community, serving as a board member at the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra. And Front of House Manager at the Registry Theatre. Before my relocation to Canada I worked as the Public Engagement Coordinator at the Contemporary Art Museum in China.

Phthalo Blue in Five Times is voiced by:

My name is JACQUILINE BRADSHAW. I am 38 years old. I live downtown Kitchener and I'm a bit of a self-proclaimed recluse who likes to do art. And I watch children.

My name is JESSE THOMAS. I am 39 years old and born and raised in Kitchener, Ontario and I live there now with my wife, Jacqueline Bradshaw, and my son, Ezra Thomas. I am a school custodian and I dabble in the arts a little bit and I like sport and good food.

My name is JOSIE and my favourite colour is yellow.

My name's MARY ANNE THOMAS. I love art and I love looking at paintings and I like walking. I'm retired, just so you know the perspective as an older person. And I love nature and music.

THERISA RODGERS. I'm an American, a seasonal resident in Canada and a permanent resident of the state of Vermont. I'm African-American and Muslim, and I believe my interpretations of visual art will also be highly influenced by my love for textiles.

St. Ives in Six Times is voiced by:

My name is BROCK RICHARDSON, I'm 29 years old, I'm part of the blind and low-vision community and I work for AMI Audio as a radio host and a contributor on the network.

FRANK. I like to make crafts. Car crafts, bird crafts and cutting crafts.

I'm KATHRINE VATCHER. I would describe myself as a filing cabinet full of files that is all full of chaos. They are all over the place! [laughs]

My name is LENA. I am a teacher at Conestoga College. I was born just north of Toronto, in Scarborough, and I lived there most of my life and I moved to KW a few years ago. So now I'm here. And I dig the vibe.

My name is TED GIBBONS and I'm an employment counsellor, I work with geometry, I'm a musician, and I do a lot of essay writing and other types of writing. So I guess maybe that's me.

Hello. My name is YVONNE and I am...well, I'm all sorts of things: I'm a mom, I'm an architect, I'm a lover of art with, actually, a background in it. I'm also a member of the community in which KWAG is situated and shamefully do not peruse the gallery often enough. But I'm glad I'm here because this is a wonderful show and in front of me is a wonderful painting that I hope to familiarize myself with more through this exercise of description.

since, for the last 15-20 years, roughly, been an insurance broker.

I am HAVILAH FARENHORST. I like baking and art, and a lot of other stuff. I do babysitting and school and karate.

I am NATASHA and I like animals, although I don't like touching all of them. And I have a lot of pets.

My name is SENTA ROSS, I'm a proud member and volunteer of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

Audio Engineering by:

NATHAN SALIWONCHYK, a multimedia artist in Guelph, Ontario.

Consultation by:

My name is BROCK RICHARDSON, I'm 29 years old, I'm part of the blind and low-vision community and I work for AMI Audio as a radio host and a contributor on the network.

Hi I'm RAMYA AMUTHAN, I'm a radio broadcaster in Toronto. I love food and my favourite thing in the world is my puppy, Glizzy.

Summit Meeting in Five Times is voiced by:

CLEMENT FARENHORST. [I have] a dog named Scruffy and [I like] playing chess, I'll go with that.

My name is JUBAL FARENHORST and I enjoy carpentry and I like birds a whole bunch—I studied them for a long time. I like hanging out with people a whole bunch and I enjoy doing school over the course of the day. But I probably enjoy the most hanging out outside working on a couple tree forts that I'm building.

My name is KARINA FARENHORST and I live in Breslau area. I grew up in Brantford but since I got married we moved to this area and I really actually enjoy Kitchener-Waterloo, I think it has a lot of different perspectives in the city and often feel like the people here often have something they are moving toward, which is a good feeling for a city.

My name is SENTA ROSS, I'm a proud member and volunteer of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

And, *Tirade in Four Times* is voiced by:

My name is BENJAMIN FARENHORST. I am about 6 feet, 1 inch tall and I am caucasian male, my background is Dutch. I am 41 years old, currently. I'm married to a wonderful woman, with 4 children. I live in Breslau, Ontario, and my occupation is that of insurance broker. My background is I was educated at Wilfred Laurier University. I have a degree in physics and chemistry and started my professional career as an engineer but have