



COVER PAGE ARTIST

Rebecca Thomson-Weissbort

I was born in rural Tennessee in 1952. Growing up in a large family with two older sisters who were already very artistic I felt there wasn't room for another painter. So as a child, I didn't allow myself

to explore the realm of colour – only my wealth of imagination through nature and music.

In my twenties, I became a teacher and lived on a farm. It was in working with special needs children that I found colour and painting were essential to how they responded.

I soon stumbled upon a workshop that introduced me to a way of looking at colour through the elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth. How could you interpret the colour blue? Could blue be the expression of an element? What is the gesture of yellow? And, if you placed blue into a red environment, how would the red behave? Strange questions

to pose towards colour – I began encountering a new way of thinking and painting.

Soon after this, I volunteered for a year at a Steiner School in California where, as part of the curriculum, children worked in the school garden. I experienced how children were able to find their voice through music, art and working within a garden that also had animals to tend.

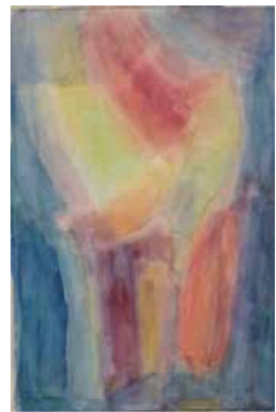
However, I wanted to experience the change of seasons and so I moved to upstate New York and began painting with Donald Hall, a student of Beppe Assenza. He taught me not only about colour but also about other painters and the qualities that a painter needs in working. One important lesson was to have discipline!

"The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web."

PABLO PICASSO

Feeling a need to deepen my understanding and skills in this 'philosophy of colour', I worked with Beppe Assenza in Switzerland, who gave me a sense of imagination, dynamic of form, and a language in colour – these are qualities that have carried me ever since.

My first experience of working with autistic children through colour began in Switzerland in a home for autistic



Left to right: *Sussex Coast*, watercolour, 52x38cm, *The Tide Moving in*, watercolour, 52x38cm, *Delight in the Sun*, watercolour, 56x38cm, *Into Another World*, watercolour, 56 x 38cm

children. Later I was invited to teach at Tobias School of Art, Emerson College and Rudolf Steiner House in London, developing an art programme while inviting other artists to contribute to the courses.

Exhibiting in venues in London, travelling to France with groups to paint, and working with special needs children through colour, I had created quite an intense programme for myself!

It was in London that I met my late husband George Weissbort, who was already an established and well-known painter whose approach was more traditional.¹ We met through discussions of line, form, composition and colour. Even though his approach was so different from mine, we were still able to discuss painting in meaningful and mutually inspiring ways. We eventually left London and found a lovely new home in the Wye Valley.

For many years, it wasn't possible for me to paint, as I felt called to attend to so many practical things. So, for a while, I laid down my brushes to support both our life together as well as George's career. There were exhibitions, articles to write, a book to be published, and trips to London. It was a challenging time, trying to keep all the balls in the air. When George passed away in 2013 there was a great void to fill.

Slowly I began to pick up my brushes again and resumed painting. My style of working is very different from what it used to be – maybe over time something else had been developing and now I could begin to express it. One thing that continues is my love of nature, and exploring the many ways of expressing what I see. For example, I watch with fascination how water covers stones, and yet the colour glistens and changes all the time. How does one interpret what one sees?

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

RACHEL CARSON

My medium has changed and I have begun to explore working with acrylics and oil. Through the colour work I've done in the past, I've gained the confidence needed to work in these new mediums. The artist's journey is never ending. As I work, there are always more questions ...not less!

Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye...it also includes the inner pictures of the soul.

EDVARD MUNCH