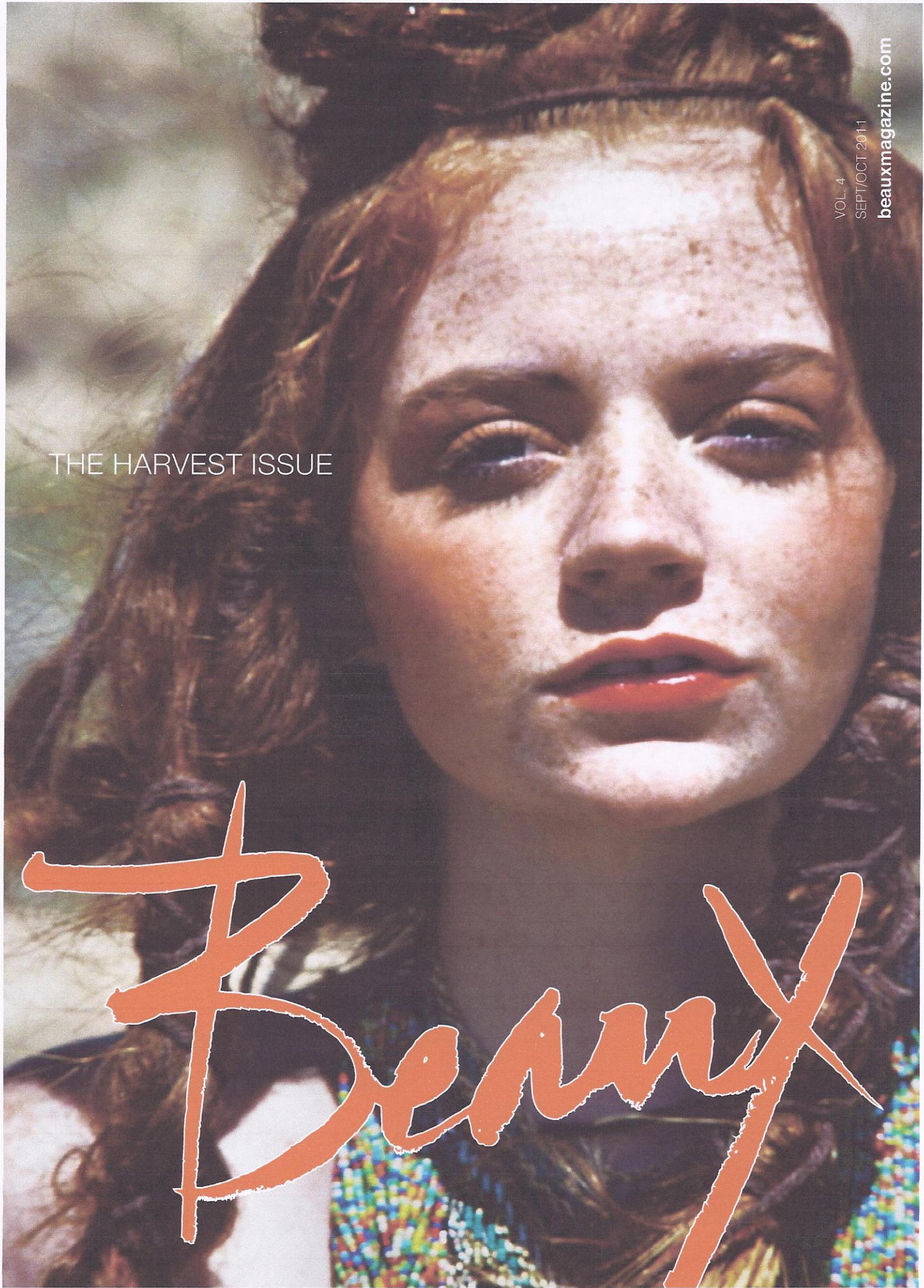


THE HARVEST ISSUE

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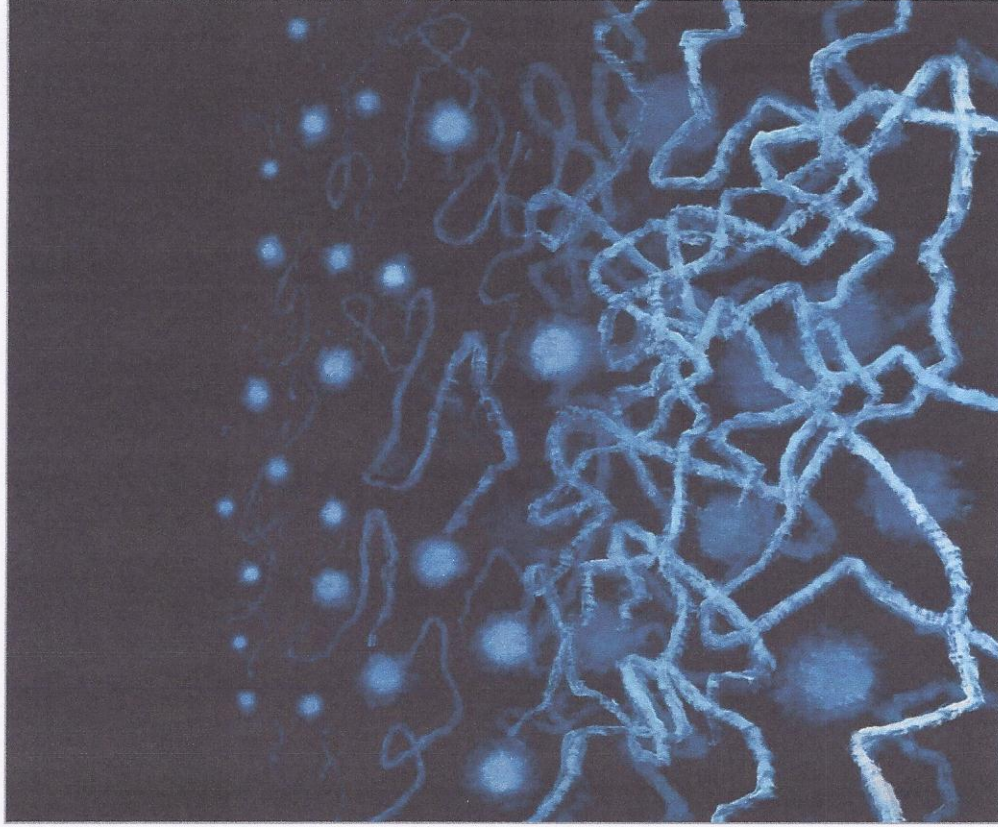
THE ART OF TIM SUMMERTON

Text and interview by Norm Yip

Summerton is a gifted, talented artist whose lies mainly in painting visceral images of his memory and experiences from childhood and Australia. His work is landscape, bordering on abstraction. He has a keen and sophisticated color palette that is mature, yet vigorous. We are pleased at BEAUX Magazine to have the opportunity to showcase a few of his artworks, along with an exclusive interview, where he speaks about his work from a personal perspective.

BEAUX: Your upbringing in Australia is crucial to your work. Can you reveal more about where and what are the instances that inform your work? Are there any places that stand out in your memory?

TS: For over fifteen years I have been painting from the Australian landscape. Most of my early works were inspired by trips up the coast in Northern New South Wales to the small and rugged beachside town of Seal Rocks. I was drawn to the sparse void like emptiness of the windswept dunes and valleys dotted with salt laden shrubs. My love for this landscape started in my late teens when I would head up with friends on summer holidays and while they were swimming and surfing I would head off drawing, a place where I could experience nature in full force and in solitude. Four years ago I moved from Sydney two hours south to Kangaroo Valley when I had an opportunity to rent a rural barn as a studio on an old dairy farm. Since then I have been totally immersed in the surrounding environment. Recently I have focussed on a particular area of this landscape which features in my body of work to be shown at The Cat Street Gallery titled the 'Floating Forest'. I live on a property that has a large section of pristine and untouched rainforest on a steep hillside that leads down to a river and almost every morning I walk through this forest before heading to



'Dark Wood'

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the studio. I have been concentrating on the unique vegetation of the strangling vines that wrap, loop and hang in the understorey layer and on the forest floor.

BEAUX: Your work seems to border on both landscape and abstraction. What are you most comfortable with in hearing your work being described? Do you prefer one over the other?

TS: I'm happy for my work to be described as abstract landscape. I feel elements of both are integral to my paintings. I enjoy focussing on particular forms in the landscape and trying to depict them in a simple manner. A faint horizon line might be the only hint that the work is derived from the landscape. In some ways my work is becoming more abstract as I delve deeper into this subject, however I hope that the paintings will still retain a great sense of place.

BEAUX: What is your working process with respect to beginning a series of paintings? It appears to be highly methodical and thought out. Is the work pre-meditated?

TS: When I'm starting a body of work I will spend 1 to 2 months preparing around twenty or so canvasses and it is in this time that most of the planning happens. Many of my paintings come from memory rather than painting onsite. I prefer the studio environment to work. I do a fair amount of preliminary drawing, however most of the planning is in my head. There are ongoing themes and threads that run throughout my work, yet rather than have an exacting idea of what the outcome will be I prefer to let the work evolve in the painting process. I will enter a series of work after deep observation in the landscape and will have some rough sketches, however I'm very open to surprises that come from the act of painting and working from memory allows for more play.



'Fading Farm Willow'

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BEAUX: In some of your abstractions, they appear to be influenced by molecular or microscopic organisms, as seen in *Dark Wood*. Tell us more about these paintings and how they came about.

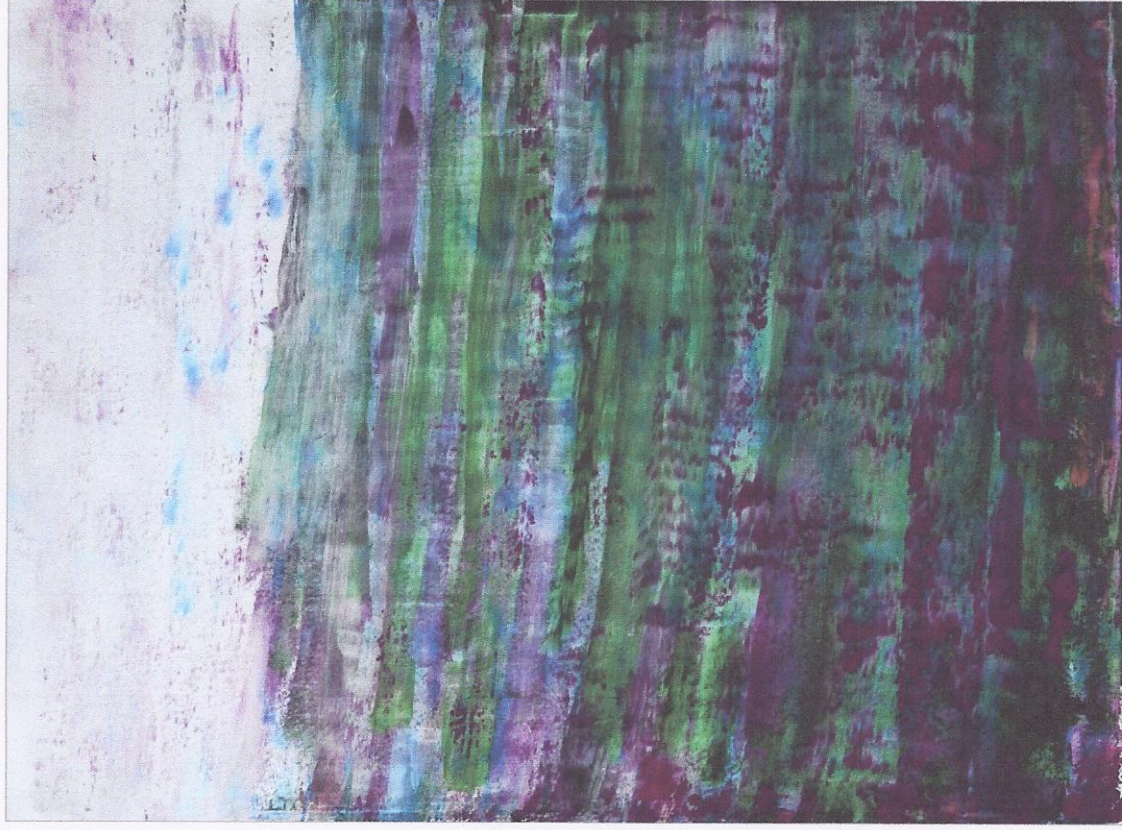
TS: *The Dark Wood* and *Night Nest* paintings came from observing the landscape at night. Driving through the countryside in the evening the car headlights illuminate roadside vegetation. Certain forms are strongly highlighted whilst most other information is left out. The road from my studio to where I live meanders along paddocks and parts are cut out of the dense rainforest and when viewed at night there is often an eerie atmosphere. The illuminated white blot like forms that float on the dark surface reflect distant hillside form and the foreground intertwining line represents the tangled forest.

BEAUX: Your colour palette is highly sophisticated. Sombre in most instances, yet bright and colourful in others. How do you arrive at this tonal range and choices?

TS: Colour has always been very important in my paintings. In my early landscapes I used a limited palette, often subtle muted tones contrasted with a bright colours such as red. More recently my colour range has expanded, however I still try to keep it reduced. There are some melancholy themes that run subtly in some of the nocturne paintings and other paintings bright tones reflect the high that I experience painting from nature.

BEAUX: The medium of oil on linen and your way of layering the surface. How did all of this come about?

TS: I have always put a lot of work into the preparation of surfaces. Some paintings may have up to ten layers of paint, many of which are hardly visible yet are integral to the final result. In the final layers form is painted onto the surface and then



'Hillside'

'I enjoy the 'history' on a canvas, the trace marks and ghosting from the layering. I have a great love for the physicality and technicality of oil paint. Many of the layers are applied with rubber blades across the surface of the canvas, which smear and smudge the wet paint in a way that the brush cannot. There is often blurriness to my works that comes from this process and they drift in and out of focus reflecting a wandering train of thought.'

rubbed out and erased in a process of addition and subtraction that echoes the use of memory. I enjoy the 'history' on a canvas, the trace marks and ghosting from the layering. I have a great love for the physicality and technicality of oil paint. Many of the layers are applied with rubber blades across the surface of the canvas, which smear and smudge the wet paint in a way that the brush cannot. There is often blurriness to my works that comes from this process and they drift in and out of focus reflecting a wandering train of thought.

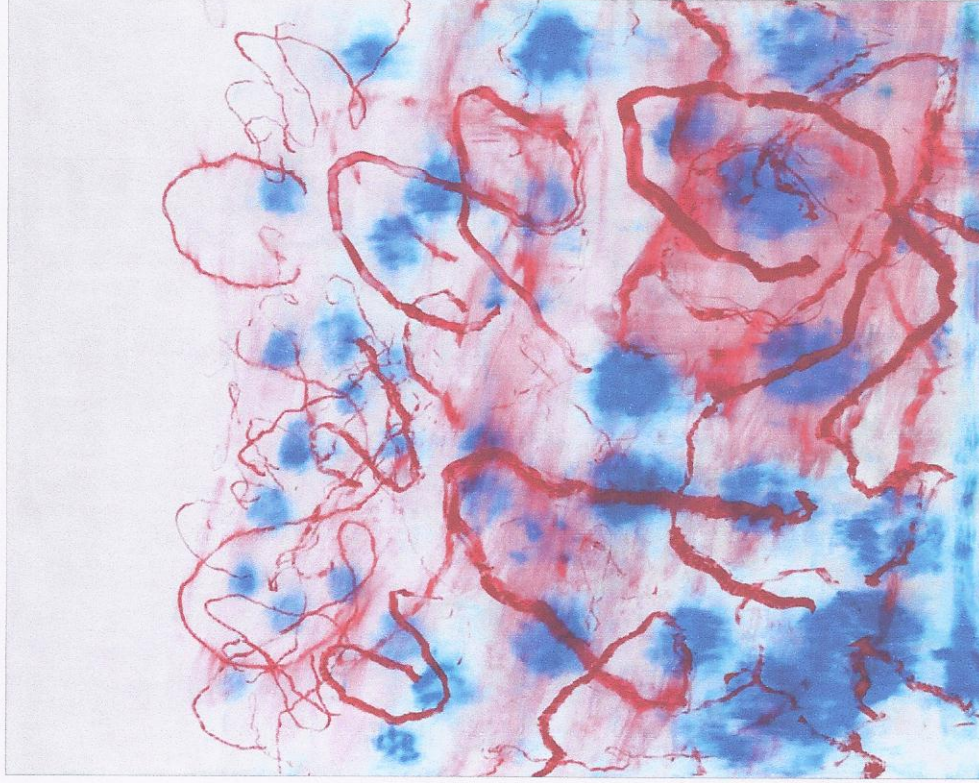
BEAUX: Emotion versus intellect. Do you have any particular thoughts on this? And does it inform your work?

TS: It would definitely be emotion first. I moved away from the city to focus purely on the powerful feeling of being immersed in nature. I hope to tell some stories through my paintings, however they are firstly a response to my surrounding environment.

BEAUX: What are your feelings regarding the audiences tastes? Does it inform you on what you will paint or draw next? Do you allow comments or trends to influence your work in any way?

TS: I try not to let too many outside influences into my work. I am happiest working alone in isolation and I always use my own experiences to inform my painting. I'm generally not drawn to trends or gimmicks in painting and admire artists that stay true to themselves. Many of my painting heroes are the quiet unassuming types who have forged their own path in the landscape.

September 2011



'Floating Forest'

TIM SUMMERTON's exhibition *Floating Forest* will be shown October 13th – November 6th, 2011

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