



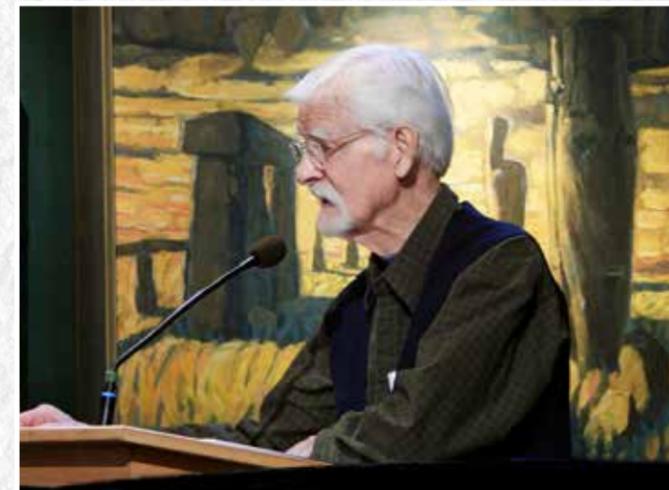
John N. Inglis
Toward a New Synthesis

“As Above, So Below.”

John N. Inglis, AOCA, CSPWC

Quest

A Retrospective Solo Show



*The Arts and Letters Club
of Toronto*

April 3 - 29, 2016

The Emerald Tablet, Hermes Trismegistus.

Preface

The work in this retrospective show (selected examples from 1960 to 2016) reflects a personal response to the radical paradigm shifts in the artistic, philosophical, religious, political, scientific, and technological aspects of our cultural milieu.

Some of the text includes quotes from my earlier publications (my 2010 book: *In Quest of a Countenance*, and the 2014 catalogue: *Postcards from the Psyche*). There are some previously shown drawings and paintings as well, in keeping with the retrospective nature of this exhibition.

From Then to Now in Broad Strokes

While the contemporary cultural shift affecting the very tenets that formed the centre of gravity for the modern worldview had been long in the making, any suggestion inviting a departure from the conventions of the day did not enter my awareness as a young person growing up here in Toronto.

The School Years

The most valuable aspect that Elementary School provided for me was learning to read. Everything else occupied a descending order of relevance and usefulness. Secondary School just prolonged the purgatory; I was not a “happy camper” in those settings. I recall that at some point in my early years my mom said to me: “Some day, when you are older, you will be able to do what you want.” At that time, such a day of deliverance seemed impossibly far off!

However, at the age of 17, I experienced a significant transformation. In 1948, fresh out of four years in Secondary School, I enrolled as a student in a four year program at the Ontario College of Art (OCA).

To be associated with fellow students

who shared similar interests; to exchange ideas about anything that captured our attention; to be immersed in the ways and means of image making; and to find a measure of emancipation from some of the cultural conventions that would limit our freedom of expression was heady stuff indeed! It was an intense period of expansion for me!

For the most part, my experience as an art student at OCA grew out of following a traditional fine art curriculum. While I explored a number of ways of working during that time and after graduation, I was not ready to pay attention to the implications that the rapidly shifting 20th century visual art scene contained.

Epiphanies

Three years after graduation from OCA, vast new mental horizons opened up with my discovery of the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell. This amounted to an epiphany of awakening to an expanded worldview that was given further impetus in the 1960s by becoming acquainted with the works of Depth Psychologists Carl Jung and Erich Neumann. These luminaries were followed later by such authors as American philosophers Ken Wilber, Steve McIntosh and cultural historian Richard Tarnas - to name but a few whose published works provided points of ignition in my expanding awareness of the existence of hitherto unknown larger realities.

It was my close encounters with the sources of deep perspectives that could be discovered in the published works of inspirational and informative writers that stimulated breakthroughs in my quest for clarification over the years.

Teaching

In September 1961, in my 30th year, I was given the opportunity to join the Evening School faculty at OCA. This was followed by an appointment to the full-time day faculty in 1965. It was here, in the institution that was my alma mater, that I discovered that I really enjoyed teaching.

Working with young, dedicated, post secondary students became a major event in my life as it led to a more profound engagement in communication using every resource that I could bring to bare for this purpose. I put a lot of time and energy into this new-found direction in my life.

I consider myself fortunate to have been able to spend a significant part of my living and learning as a teacher at OCA. Although I put in six years as an administrator: two as Acting Chair in the Department of Foundation Studies and one as Acting Chair of the Department Fine Art, and three as Chair of Fine Art (1987 - 1990), I consider my most productive and rewarding time to have been spent with my students. I have calculated that I have been privileged to meet and work with between five and six thousand students that were entrusted to my care during my tenure at the College. I received the A. J. Casson award for distinguished service to OCA upon my retirement in 1990.

Winds of Change

It was during the 1960s that the winds of cultural change reached our shores and began a steady assault on the traditional bastions of our academic institution. Postmodernism, in its deconstructive aspect, had arrived on our doorstep at OCA. It was determined to “huff and puff” until it impacted the familiar ways of delivering our curriculum. It continues to blow to this day.

Reflections

I have been inclined toward the practice of drawing and painting from an early age. Coinciding with this tendency has been an innate curiosity about the world I live in that has, in later years, led to finding answers to the big cultural questions of the day.

With the potential of promise on the one hand and hazard on the other, I embarked on a quest for meaning in a time of radical cultural change. I adopted a mythic, narrative mode of expression in my visual art work in the early 1960s that allowed my drawn and

painted images and sculptural forms to function as metaphors reflecting this quest. In retrospect, in circa 1955, it was Joseph Campbell's book: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that provided the key to my chosen direction in visual art at that time.

Everything that followed over the years to the present day is consistent with a deep dive into the psychic substratum where I found the images that have given evidence in my work to an internal quest for meaning in a cultural world on the move.

Further clues and references

In his book *Cosmos and Psyche* page 45, cultural historian Richard Tarnas lends clarity to the historical events leading to the current cultural condition:

“While the Copernican revolution (1508 - 12) impelled and symbolized the Renaissance and brought forth the Enlightenment, the Depth Psychology revolution (Freud, 1905) reflected the inward-turning descent and deconstruction of the self that commenced at the end of the 19th century and brought forth the postmodern era.”

In painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* in 1907, Picasso demolished some 600 years of European canonical aesthetic values in the visual arts. Many historians consider this work to be the first “truly” 20th century painting. It reduces the traditional rendering of the three dimensional world of natural appearances to flat shape, line, and colour inventions originating in the mind of the artist. “I don't paint things as I see them, but the way I think them.” Picasso.

In his book *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, Jungian Depth Psychologist Erich Neumann describes the process whereby archetypal values are held in the collective field of a cultural canon that has reached a steady state of balance among its various components. A collapse of this field occurs when the presiding values give way to emerging archetypes of a new order.

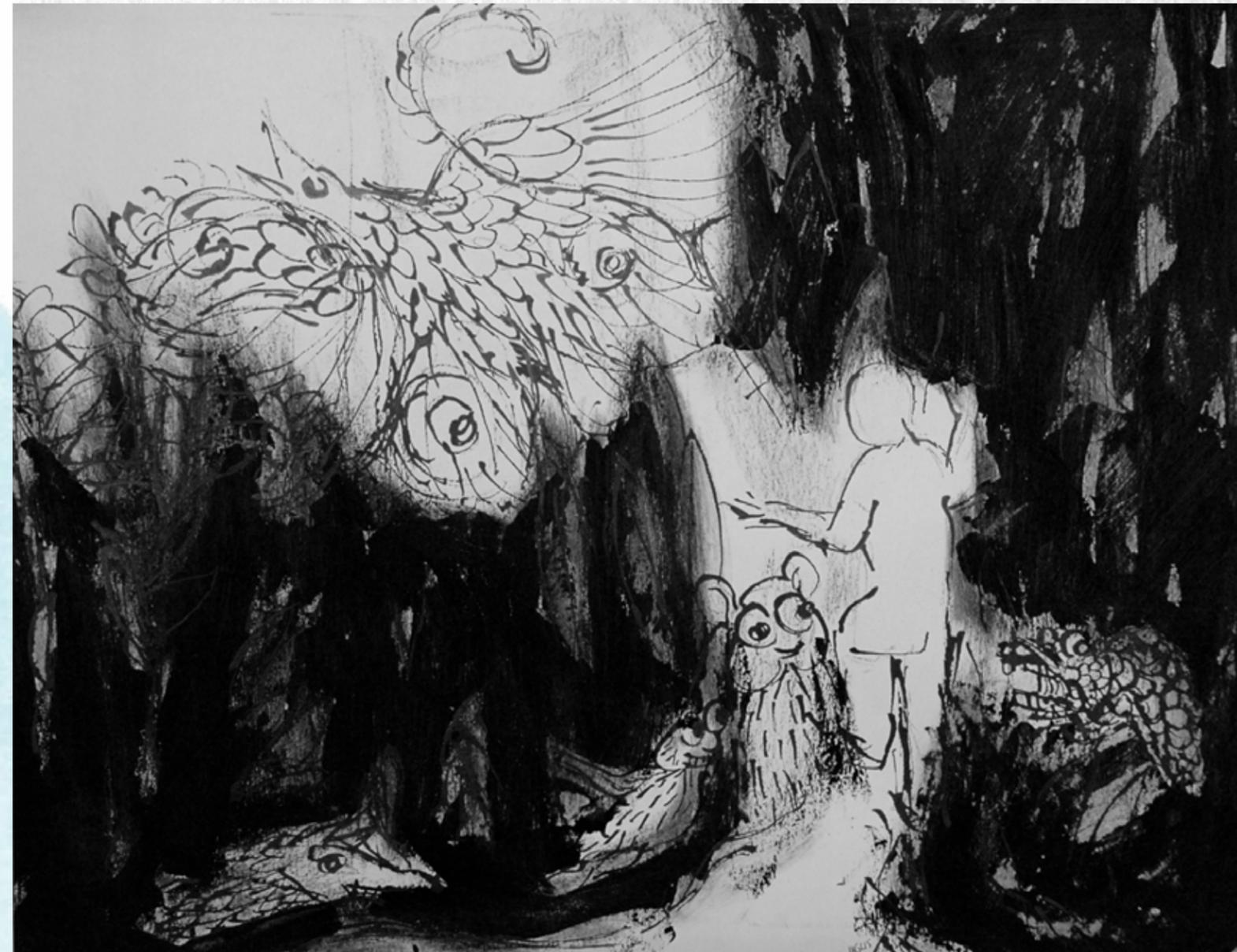
Affinities

I found that I had a certain affinity with the ideas of Wassily Kandinsky (1866 - 1944) and Paul Klee (1879 - 1940) insofar as they reflected an “inward-turning” (Tarnas) worldview in their work.

In 1912, Kandinsky's book *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* was published. He writes: “The Renaissance ... derived its inspiration solely from those periods of Greek and Roman art which were

preoccupied with the expression of external reality.” But, as he says: “The relationships in art are not necessarily ones of outward form, but are founded on an inner sympathy of meaning.”

I found this quote from Paul Klee's writing in Carl Jung's book *Man and His Symbols*, page 263: “... it is not a question of merely reproducing what is seen, the secretly perceived is made visible.”



Surprise Encounter, drawing, 17" x 23", 1960

Into the Unknown, drawing, 20.5" x 28.5, 1962



Influences from the Far East

It is interesting to note that Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian (1872 - 1994) found significance in Theosophy. This is the name of a movement founded in the 19th century by Madame Blavatsky and others. It is based on the Vedas, the Shastras, and the Puranas - the sacred scriptures of India. Our own Canadian Group of Seven member Lawren Harris (1885 - 1944) was also attracted to the teachings of Theosophy and incorporated some of this influence in his later works.

Just as the work of Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and Erich Neumann alerted me to the existence of wider mental horizons in the 1950s and 1960s, more doors opened for me in the esoteric, subtle domain, in my reading in 1980 of the book *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. I too became attracted to the wisdom teachings of the Far East, not in the form of Theosophy however. Yogananda's book prompted me to spend about ten years in becoming further acquainted with the immensely rich source of inspiration and practice emanating from this part of the world.

Post modernism

While I was interested in the work of 19th and 20th century visual artists and made some excursions into Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism during my student years and after, I did not have an in depth understanding of the larger implications that the rapidly changing visual art scene implied. A workable

overview of this perplexing free-fall from former cultural values did not become available to me until after retirement when I had more time and energy to devote to its study. As it is, I continue to add to my understanding of the postmodern scene as new insights allow for deeper perspectives to take hold.

Charles Burchfield

American watercolour painter Charles Burchfield (1893 - 1967) has had more influence on my work than any other painter that I esteem. His visionary landscape paintings contain wonderfully evocative depictions of the natural environment in its many moods and manifestations. I find his work to be redolent with sense impressions and rich in aesthetic inventions.

Burchfield's most significant work has its residence in the transpersonal. As such, at its deepest level of expression, it is in accord with the essence of being, the source of creativity itself. He speaks (sings) from the level of essence when he says that the world, himself, and the source of creativity merge in a moment of recognition that proclaims the intrinsic unity of all things.

"The artist's eye should always be turned in upon his inner life and his ear should be always alert for the voice of inward necessity. This is the only way of giving expression to what the mystic vision commands."
Kandinsky.

Toward a New Synthesis

In retrospect; since childhood, there seems to have been a deep affinity with Ontario's wonderfully rich natural environment. It has provided the stimulus for the production of much of my visual artwork to this day.

The diminutive, androgynous figure in many of my drawings and paintings can be taken as representing myself and by extension, humanity on an interior quest for meaning in a contemporary world of radical change. The figure follows a path through primordial landscapes that provide settings for the fundamental nature of the quest at this juncture between worldviews.

"Ours is an age between worldviews, creative yet disoriented, a transitional era when the old cultural vision no longer holds and the new has not yet constellated."
Cosmos and Psyche, page 26, Richard Tarnas.

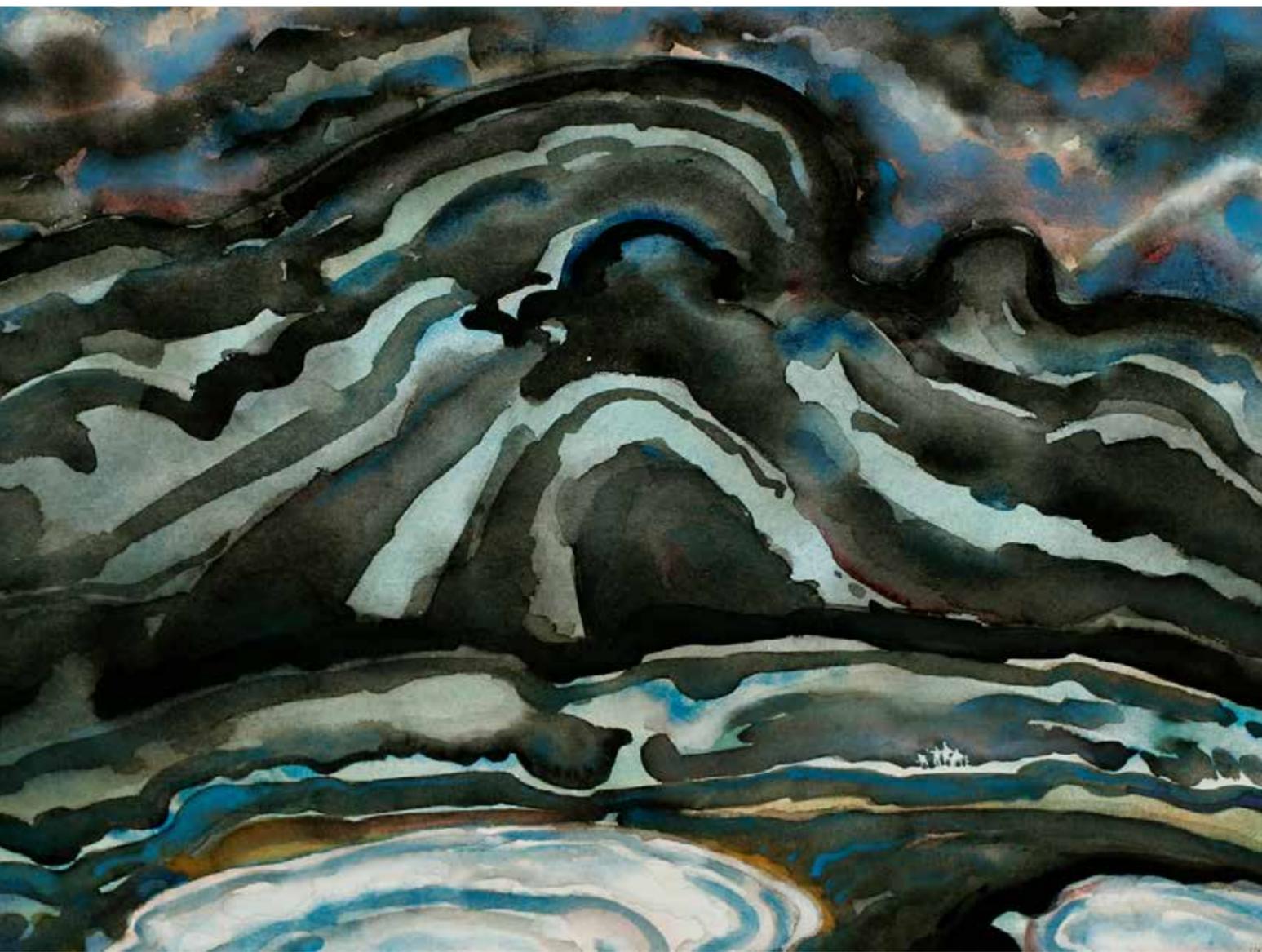
I have been following the work of American Integral philosopher Steve McIntosh since 2009 when I purchased his book *Integral Consciousness*. Since then I have added two more: *Evolution's Purpose* 2012 and most recently *The Presence of the Infinite*, 2015.

In the 2015 book, McIntosh makes the case for the qualities of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness as primary values that are intrinsic to fundamental levels of our authentic human nature.

On page 223, McIntosh Writes: "... postmodernism's cultural maturation and consolidation into a clear position of antithesis with respect to the thesis of our larger society, now presages the emergence of a synthesis. This synthesis, of course, is represented by the evolutionary worldview, which holds the promise of a future form of culture that will be attractive enough to entice politically significant numbers of people in the developed world to adopt the more evolved perspectives we need to meet the challenges of our age."

When the elements of renewal encompassing body, mind, and spirit coalesce in an integral configuration, humanity will gain access to the next evolutionary turning on the expanding spiral of life's dynamic trajectory.

John N. Inglis



Survivors, watercolour, 21" x 29", 1974

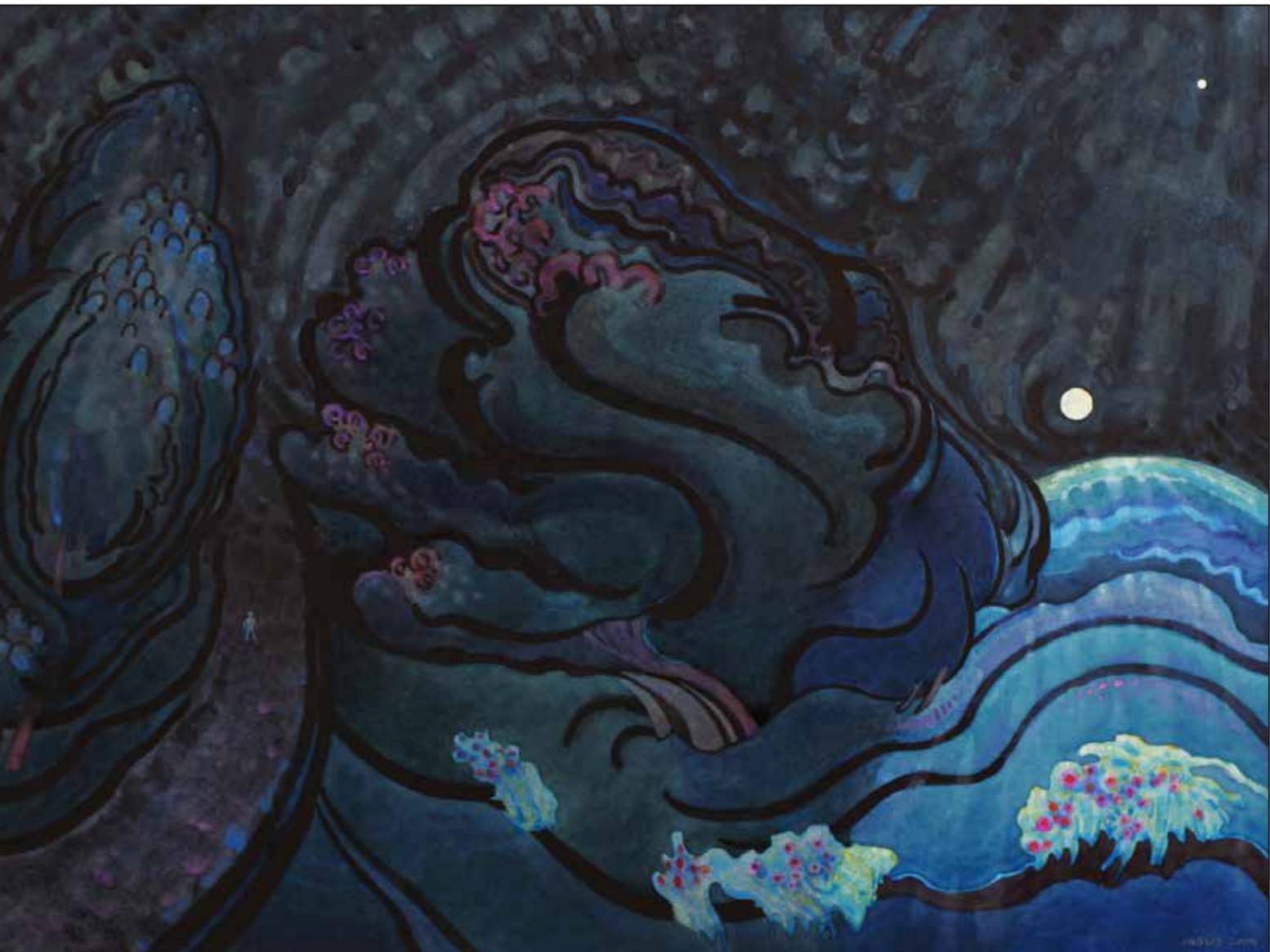
A New Thought This Way Comes, watercolour, 20" x 27.5", 1986



Summer, watercolour, 20" x 28", 1986



Spring Peepers and Spawning Fish, watercolour, 20" x 28", 1994



Night Journey with the Moon and Venus, watercolour, 17" x 23"

Of Fireflies and the Milky Way, watercolour, 18" x 24", 2006



June, Early Morning, watercolour, 18" x 24", 2008



An Emerging Thought Form, watercolour, 18" x 24", 2008 ►



Winter Dreams, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2012



Tree of Life, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2012



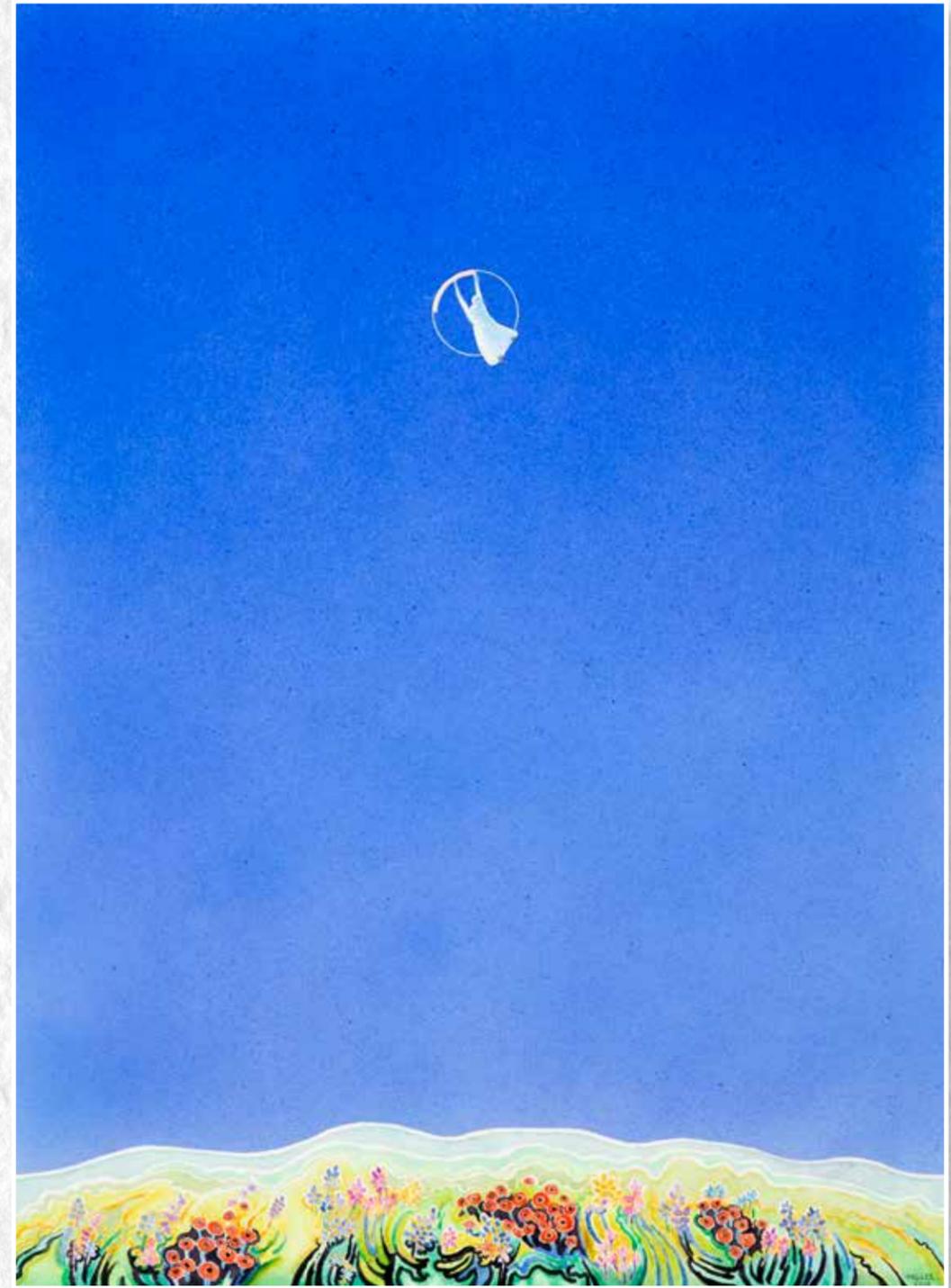
Buds and Blossoms, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2013



◀ *Bright Day, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2012*



Building the Circle, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2013



◀ *Rapture, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2013*

Sea, Sky and Sand, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2013



Evolution, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2014



Wave, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2015

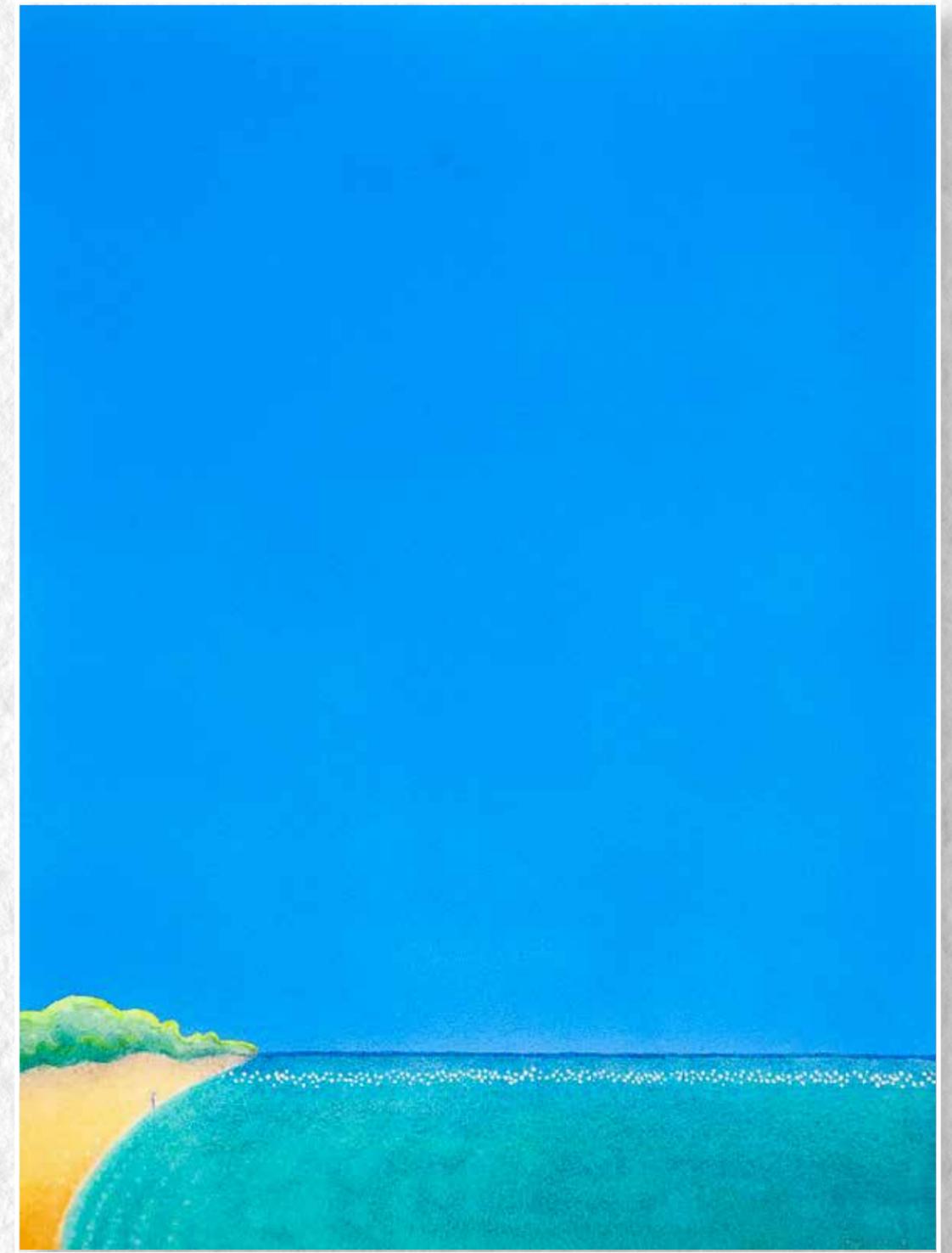


Star Bright, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2015

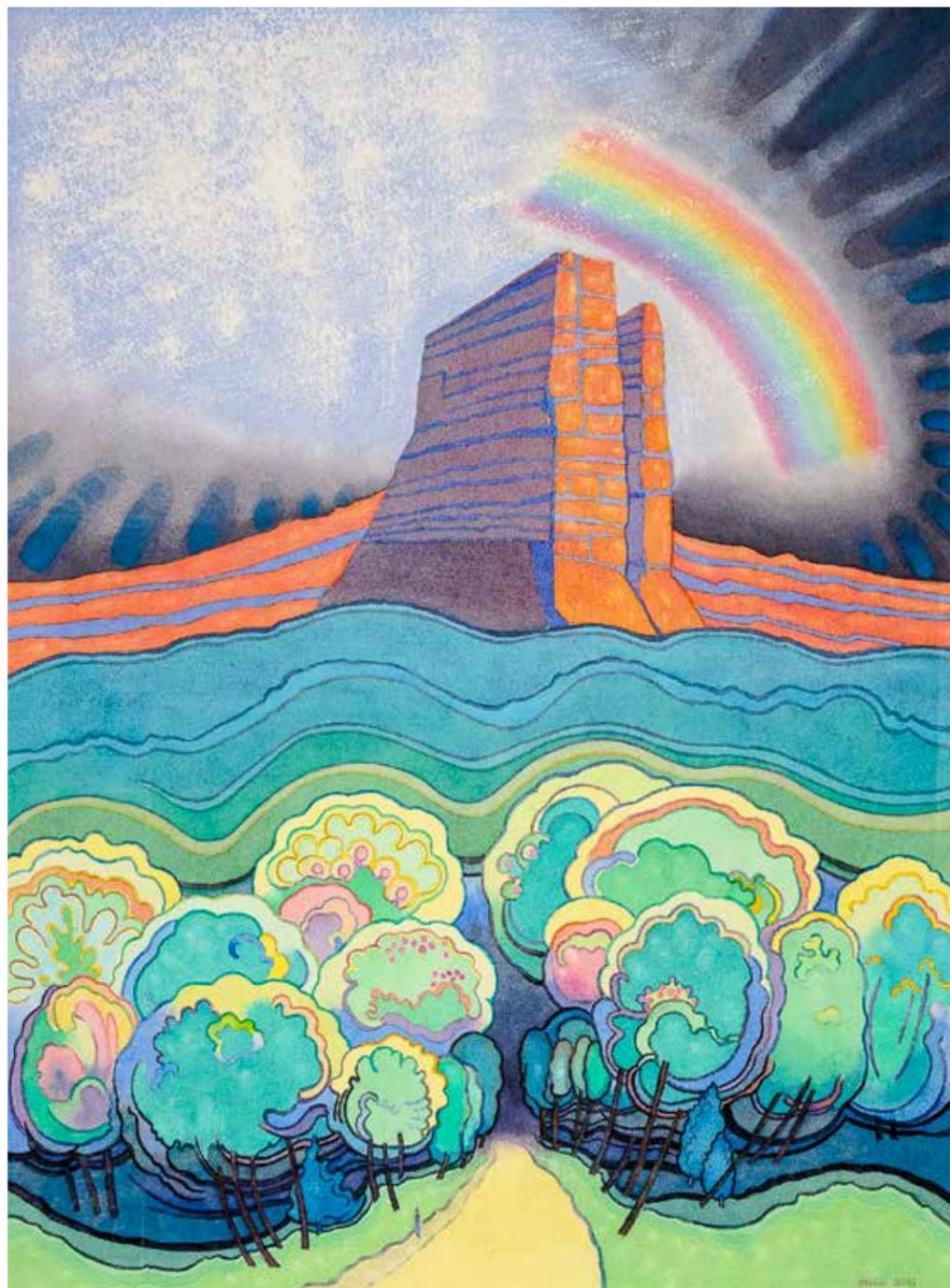


Spring Peepers, Pussy Willow, and Rainbows, 17" x 23", 2015

Big Sky, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2016



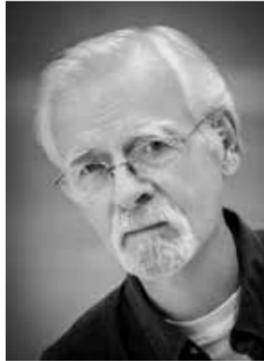
High Mesa, 17" x 23", 2015



August Moon Rising, 17" x 23", 2016 ▶



Biographical Highlights



John N. Inglis, AOCA, CSPWC

Born in Toronto, 1931. Graduated with honours in Drawing and Painting from the Ontario College of Art (OCA) in 1952. Participated in many groupshows and held several solo exhibitions in the years that followed to the present day.

Joined the Evening School faculty at OCA from 1961 to 1968. Became a member of the full time day faculty in 1965. Served as Acting Chair of the

Foundation Studies Department 1976/77, and 1985/86, and the Fine Art Department 1981/82. Was Coordinator of the OCA Florence Off-Campus Studies Program 1978/79. Elected Chair of the Fine Art Department 1987/90. Retired from OCA in 1990. Received the A. J. Casson award for distinguished service to OCA in 1990.

Launched my book: *In Quest of a Countenance: A Search for Meaning in a World in Transition* at the Art Square Gallery in 2010, in conjunction with OCAD U's first Alumni group exhibition. Elected a Life Member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour in 2010. Awarded the Alumni Emeritus Member Designation in 2012, "In recognition of long term dedicated service to the Alumni Association and to OCAD University."

Joined the Arts and Letters Club in 2012 and participated in many of its group shows to date. Solo show, *Postcards from the Psyche*, the Yellow House Gallery, October 2014. Solo show, *the Toronto Arts and Letters Club, Quest, a Retrospective, 1960 to 2016*, April 3 - 29, 2016.

Summer Meadow, watercolour, 17" x 23", 2016



A larger number of works that include drawings, oils, watercolours, sculpture, text, and poetry can be found in my book: *In Quest of a Countenance: A search for Meaning in a World in Transition*.

**“To see the world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.”**

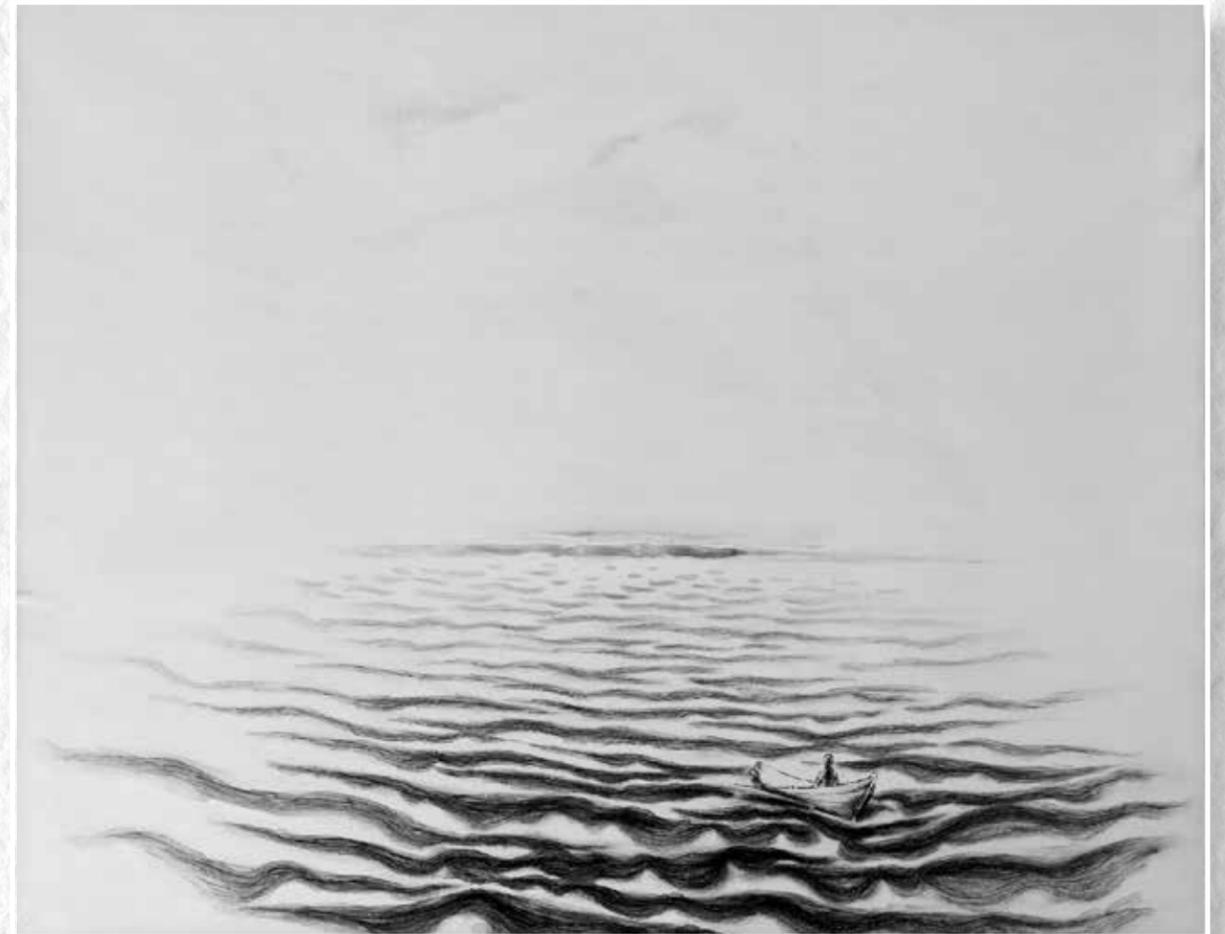
William Blake

Website: www.inglisquest.com

Email: john@inglisquest.com

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Open Sea to Land, drawing, 22" x 30", 1962



Back Cover: Ship of Grace, oil, 24" x 30", 1965



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