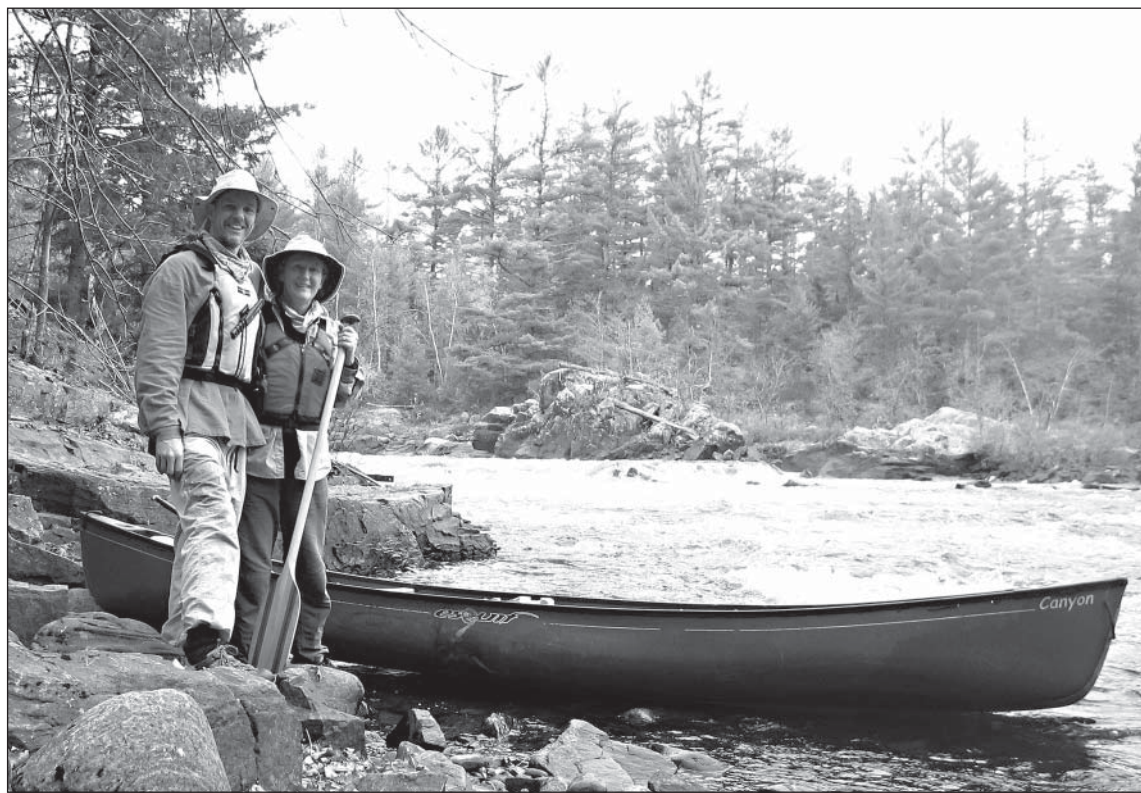




By Phil Jenkins

The Culture Vulture

Parallel Lives



Reid McLachlan and Becky Mason at Crooked Chute on the Petawawa River. The couple will be hosting a joint show of their respective paintings, called Indelible Souls, at Ottawa's Cube Gallery near the Parkdale Market.

Photo courtesy Reid McLachlan

"So that's what we're doing here," Becky Mason says cheerfully, and she claps her hands.

She steps out of her Chelsea home in the woods, walks under the four cedar strip canoes of various repair slung above the carport, and waves farewell after an hour of gentle interrogation by me about her art. Now, she is grateful to be outdoors; Mason prefers skies to ceilings.

Becky Mason's hands are very adept at holding a brush or paddle; when the paddle is in her grip these days, more often than not she is teaching. It's her summer job, passing on to many local canoeists and outlying paddlers in a wide radius the considerable skills her father Bill taught her. Bill Mason was a famous canoeist and a painter, and an undeniable influence on his daughter in that he helped her to look at nature with a clear, loving eye.

When the brush strokes replace the paddle strokes, Becky produces, on creased Japanese rice paper, delicate, light-filled watercolours that reflect what her inner eye has seen of natural beauty. A friend, so she told me, bought the paper in a fire sale; eight hundred wet but salvageable sheets for \$5. The day is coming soon when the paper will be all used up, a testimony to her years of productivity.

Absent from the house during that hour was her husband, Reid McLachlan. He was still at work. The two artists met at the High School of Commerce many moons ago and have led proximitous (sic) lives ever since.

Reid too works to the Canadian rhythm of many artists—earn enough in the summer to paint and create a stock of canvases through the winter; for 20 years, he has worked four

months of the year as a canoe builder and repairer at Trailhead in Ottawa—the owner, Wally Schnaber, is a patron of the arts and we could use many more like him.

When he gets home Reid, who has inherited his mother's art-gene, will not be long out of his studio, an outbuilding crammed with finished canvases and art-paraphernalia, and CDs scattered like leaves and palettes with stalagmites of paint rising up from them.

Becky and Reid clearly have the tricky art of living together down (there is a wonderful book by Phyllis Rose called Parallel Lives that analyses the marriages of twin highly creative people) and it seems to be based on enormous respect for each other's work, even as their styles on the canvas are studies in contrast.

It's a room I would chose as the set for a film about an artist obsessed with getting to the next canvas, to the next discovery. Becky does not go in there much; she is allergic, in a wince-inducing twist of fate, to oil-based paints, a physical fact that almost killed her when it manifested itself.

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book by Phyllis Rose called Parallel Lives that analyses the marriages of twin highly creative people) and it seems to be based on enormous respect for each other's work, even as their styles on the canvas are studies in contrast.

In her studio room within the house, Becky gives deep thought to her next series—it might be mountains, ice storms or canoes or waves on a shore, currently it's trees—and then executes them rapidly, almost as though she is on auto-memory. Reid in his joyous confinement is steadily outputting portraits of characters from a narrative that we must divine by looking good and hard into his flesh-tones and grey-blues and then as hard into ourselves. There is an answer there somewhere; the trick is putting your hands on it.

There are no people in Becky's works; there are always people in Reid's. Now, for the first time in all their very productive years together, they are having a joint show, an event in their joint lives that produces a smile whenever they mention it. Their home is actually a joint gallery, of course.

I couldn't help but envy them the ability to decorate your home with wonderful art with your name on it. Starting at the end of next week, the energetic, innovative Cube Gallery in Ottawa, down near the colourful Parkdale Market will host the portentously entitled Indelible Souls.

Until September, the walls at Cube will mimic the walls of the Mason/McLachlan home and testify to the inner workings of these two braided people. Sounds like a cause for celebration to me.

Contact the Culture Vulture at phil@philjenkins.ca.

ASTRAL REFLECTIONS

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

Aries - (March 21-April 19)
Romance, adventures of the heart, pleasure, self-expression, creative surges, speculative wins, the joys of raising and teaching children - these are yours, this week and the next couple! You could fall in love! This has been an area to avoid for the last year and a half, and nominally still holds some difficult karma until August 21, it might be time to dip your toe in. (If you were born March 19 to 21, remain wary - take no chances.) Sunday to Tuesday emphasize your career progress, dealings with higher-ups, and status concerns - charge ahead, all is good! (Relationship) wishes come true Tuesday-Thursday!

Taurus - (April 20-May 20)
The emphasis lies on domestic situations, real estate, security, retirement, gardening/agri, nutrition and soul. This area has been either a "temptation trap" for the last 17 months, or a place where benefits were literally dumped in your lap. If you've been chasing an elusive goal in this zone, it's time to call it a day and get out - use the weeks ahead to do this, to end projects and associations - a little (financial) pain now can prevent a real headache later. If in doubt, pursue income, travel and creative or romantic projects - these are safe (and favoured, Sunday/Monday and Friday. Career luck mid-week!

Gemini - (May 21-June 20)
Your communications, driving, and similar skills are highlighted. You might even be "on the road." The past 13 years (through 2008) have been disappointing in relationships. Your present restlessness is a reaction, even an acknowledgement within you, that there is more, and you want to find it. Your present home/abode might feel like a prison, but unfortunately a new home you move to now (before October 29) can become the same thing, different model. So wait, if you can, to commit yourself. If you really want to cure present restlessness, travel internationally, attend school, write, pursue love!

Cancer - (June 21-July 22)
You radiate charm all August. Relationships succeed Sunday to dawn Tuesday - go forth, seek others, seek agreements, buy and sell, ask for a pay raise, be receptive to an exciting meeting! Your sensual side swells in August, as Tuesday to Thursday might demonstrate - an intimate encounter is likely. These few days are excellent for a financial re-arrangement, investment, lifestyle change, research, health diagnosis or commitment. (In investments, be aware: you might easily overpay.) Mellow wisdom, gentle love come Friday - both are "frustrated" Saturday. It's an easy, profitable week!

Leo - (July 23-Aug. 22)
Your energy, charisma and luck remain high! Determine right now to accomplish great things during this easy, smooth and productive week. Chores confront you Sunday to Tuesday dawn - plunge in, you'll have good results. Exciting meetings occur Tuesday eve to Thursday - love is possible, especially for singles. So are splendid agreements, new friends and fresh horizons, travel and relocation luck, possible fame. Be diplomatic, eager to join - go halfway with someone. You feel a new lightness, not evident since 2007! Investments, intimate commitments, lifestyle changes work Friday, not Saturday.

Virgo - (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Lie low, conserve energy and emotional calm. This is an easy, smooth week; it starts with wisdom. The past 6 years have brought unpredictable associations with unusual, fascinating new people. This unpredictability continues into 2010. In that year, you will either break with someone, in a big, final way, or you'll revise a relationship drastically (establishing a very unusual home in the process?) or you'll find someone new who's unpredictable and very sexual, or you'll relocate for employment reasons ((or you'll become famous for your work). But for now, rest, think, and DON'T volunteer.

Libra - (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Relationship wishes can come true now into deep August. (Though it will seem like "light August" as breezes of optimism, social delights, flirtations, fun and entertainment buoy you!) Tackle important home/shelter, food, family, real estate, retirement and security issues Sunday to Tuesday dawn, while an easy, productive atmosphere prevails. Realize that this entire sector will grow more and more important as the months and years pass: big adjustments lie ahead! Plunge into romance, creative and speculative projects, pleasure and beauty forays, Tuesday eve through Thursday: you're a winner now!

Scorpio - (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Your career, prestige relations and reputation are highlighted. You might face a tug-o-war (Tuesday to Thursday) between ambitions in this arena, and demands on security, family, or property fronts. This should be easy to work out, but if you must choose between the two, remember that security, family and property are where your luck lies now to January 2010. Travel, get in touch with people, deal with paperwork and other details Sunday to Tuesday dawn. Romance, creative and gambling urges, pleasure and beauty please you Friday, but hit barriers Saturday. It's a great, productive week!

Sagittarius - (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
A sweet, wise mood flows over you this month. Luck accompanies international travel, law, post-secondary education, cultural rituals, and love. You might feel an intense reaction to a certain person - this could be love or (you hate being teased) war. You'll communicate splendidly on ambition and career fronts. Your investment and financial luck is mild but solid. You're attracted to intimacy and "heavy breathing" all month - remember that love or war choice! You could fall in love, if you haven't last month! Chase money Sunday/Monday. Tuesday-Thursday bring travel, talks, friends.

Capricorn - (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You'll like this week. It's chock-full of progress, accomplishment and monetary gain! Your energy and charisma surge upwards Sunday to Tuesday dawn - start things, ask for your way, seek favours, give commands. If you acted unethically during the past few years, use Sunday/Monday to rectify those slip-ups, for August can reveal uncomfortable secrets to the world. Chase money Tuesday eve to Thursday - luck rides with you, but it's much better for selling than spending. If investing, avoid inflated prices. (Remember my general economic advice.) Communicate with others Friday, not Saturday.

Aquarius - (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Relationships reach a climax. I've advised you for months not to get seriously involved. However, someone who enters your life this August could knock your socks off - in the nicest way! The only "warning" exists if you encounter someone first met in the last 18 months, or if you were born January 19 to 21. (If so, an exciting person will enter October onward.) Take a breather Sunday to Tuesday mid-day. Think about relationships and future plans, contact government agencies, institutions and charities. Meditate. Your energy and charisma soar Tuesday eve to Thursday - take advantage!

Pisces - (Feb. 19-March 20)
Tackle chores first. You'll accomplish a lot during this smooth, quietly lucky week. (Except Saturday the 8th, when your assertiveness might spark a disappointment.) Continue to guard against domestic friction. Don't rent nor move into a new home (except a very temporary one) before August 25. (But buying is alright, as an investment more than a home.) A sparkling thread of amour, creativity or pleasure will provide relief from August's drudgery. Social joys, flirtations and entertainment brighten Sunday-Tuesday. Retreat Tuesday eve to Thursday. Success accompanies you Friday in love and work.



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Daily Horoscope: text ADD+YOUR SIGN to 131313 (eg. ADDLEO) for \$0.50/day