



26 Jack Hamilton Bush

ARCA CGP CSGA CSPWC OSA P11 1909 – 1977

Deep August

acrylic on canvas, on verso signed, titled, dated August 1976 and inscribed *Acrylic Polymer W.B. / Top (with arrow) / c-70* on a label

43 x 43 ½ in, 109.2 x 110.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Collection of the Artist
Galerie Elca London, Montreal, September 1976
Private Collection, Montreal
Fine Canadian Art, Heffel Fine Art Auction House,
May 23, 2007, lot 127

Acquired from the above by Dr. Luigi Rossi
Estate of Dr. Luigi Rossi

LITERATURE

Roger Boulet, *A Legacy of Canadian Art from Kelowna Collections*, Kelowna Art Gallery, 2017, reproduced page 77 with the related concept drawing

The Rossi Collection: A Circle of Friends, Kelowna Art Gallery, 2019, listed page 43 and reproduced page 39

Sarah Stanners, *Jack Bush Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné, Volume 4, 1972 – 1977*, 2024, listed page 468 and reproduced page 469, catalogue #3.46.1976.45

EXHIBITED

Galerie Elca London, Montreal, *Jack Bush*, circa 1986
Kelowna Art Gallery, *A Legacy of Canadian Art from Kelowna Collections*, July 1 – October 15, 2017, with the related concept drawing
Kelowna Art Gallery, *The Rossi Collection: A Circle of Friends*, November 10, 2018 – January 20, 2019

SOME COLLECTORS OF fine art are driven by such passion and a fierce dedication to a period or style of art that the artworks in their collection seem to tell a story together, as if each painting, drawing or sculpture is connected, despite their wholly distinct origins. The Kelowna Art Gallery took the lead in celebrating the vision of the late, long-time art collector Dr. Luigi Rossi (1956 – 2017) by mounting a special exhibition in 2018 that brought his collection to public attention. An interview with the exhibition's curator, Stew Turcotte, revealed that Rossi referred to the artworks he collected as “his friends.”¹

Dr. Rossi was a graduate of the University of British Columbia's medical school and went on to establish his career in radiology in Grand Prairie, Alberta. Over the years, he amassed a collection totaling more than 170 artworks, many of which were a testament to his early and abiding love of Indigenous art, including works by Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, Jackson Beardy, Norval Morrisseau and Rita Letendre. A common thread that unites many of these artists is their beautiful handling of colour. Along with Morrisseau, another trailblazer in the use of acrylic paints in Canada was Jack Bush. By the time he painted *Deep August*, in the summer of 1976, he was so accomplished with the medium that combining different techniques in one composition (sponging for the ground and brushwork for shapes of colour) was something he did with ease, and to great effect.

Dr. Rossi acquired *Deep August* relatively late, in 2007. To my knowledge, this painting, and its related sketch on paper, were the only works by Bush in his collection. Why did Dr. Rossi choose this painting? Was it the bright colours, or was it the composition that attracted him? Around the same time that Bush painted *Deep August*, he produced a painting titled *Indian Bonnet*; similar in style to *Deep August*, its title suggests a distinct source of inspiration: the First Nations headdress. It is impossible to say whether Bush understood the significance of the headdress, but the general shape of the feather-like strokes seen in *Indian Bonnet*, and its bright colours, make the visual connection apparent.

Deep August, however, deconstructs or breaks away from the more symbolic shape of *Indian Bonnet*. This is in keeping with Bush's methods in that he often took cues from the real world—such as flowers, corporate logos and women's fashion—as a jumping-off point for elements of shape and colour, which he would remix into abstract paintings that remained quite separate from their sources. It is equally arguable, however, that Bush simply titled his paintings only once they were complete, therefore naming them according to what the finished composition recalled, by chance.

Similarly, there is some debate about Bush's late chalk sketches from 1975 and 1976: Were they produced in hindsight to remember the paintings he had already made, or were they part of a preliminary process of planning a painting? According to Karen Wilkin, the answer is a bit of both. First, these sketches were “fastened to the studio wall to serve as suggestions for

paintings.”² Later, Bush would add colour to the sketch once the corresponding painting was complete. In this way, they function more as pictures for personal record keeping.

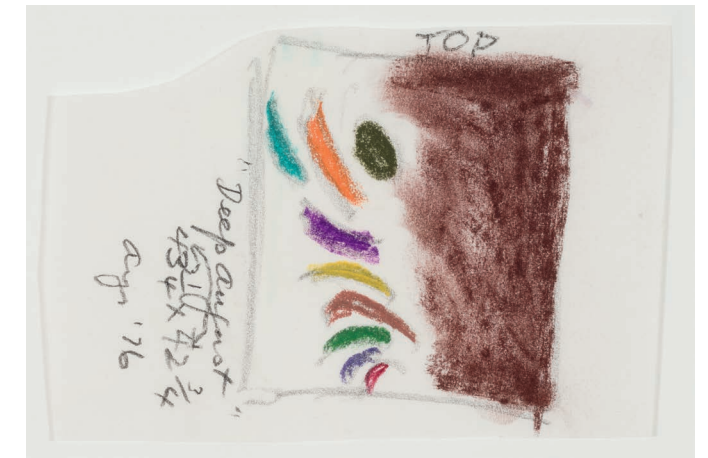
Studies like the one for *Deep August* were never intended for exhibition; they were private keepsakes and a part of the artist's working methods. Nonetheless, Wilkin praised them, writing, “The fascination of the studies rests in their intimacy, in the very fact that Bush meant them to be private.”³

We thank Dr. Sarah Stanners, director of the Jack Bush Catalogue Raisonné, contributor to the Bush retrospective originating at the National Gallery of Canada in 2014, and adjunct professor at the University of Toronto, Department of Art History, for contributing the above essay.

This work is included in Stanners's recently published *Jack Bush Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné*, as #3.46.1976.45.

1. Kelowna Art Gallery, “The Rossi Collection at the Kelowna Art Gallery,” November 18, 2018, https://youtu.be/kfYw2o_sRng?si=02mgtgpUqa2vqzsv.
2. Karen Wilkin, adapted from “Jack Bush Works on Paper,” in *Jack Bush: An Intimate View* (Edmonton: Woltjen/Udell Gallery, 1987), exhibition catalogue.
3. Ibid.

We are pleased to include the concept drawing for *Deep August* with the sale of this lot.



Jack Hamilton Bush

ARCA CGP CSGA CSPWC OSA P11 1909 – 1977

Concept Drawing for Deep August

graphite and crayon on paper, titled and dated August 1976
3 ⅞ x 5 ¾ in, 9.8 x 14.6 cm

PROVENANCE

Newzones Gallery of Contemporary Art, Calgary
Acquired from the above by Dr. Luigi Rossi
Estate of Dr. Luigi Rossi

ESTIMATE: \$70,000 – 90,000