

# From Earth to Sound: Living with Tinnitus

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Painting by Eleanor Ponté

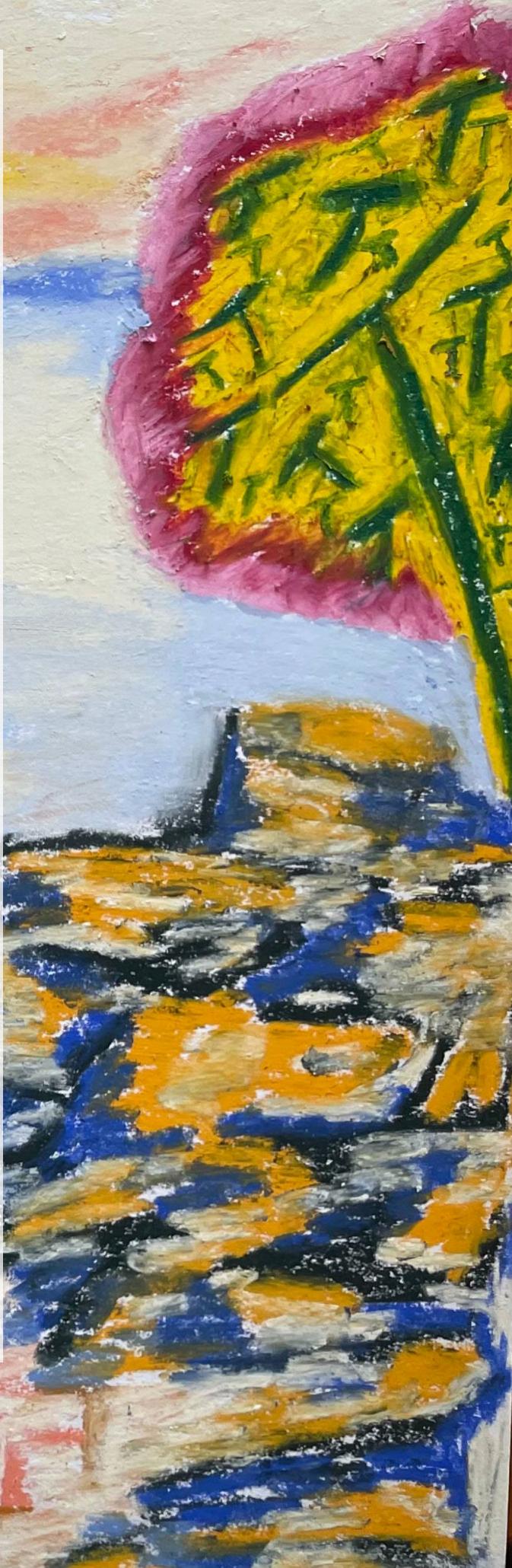
Some artworks are looked at. Others are lived with. From earth to sound ... living with Tinnitus belongs to the second category. Painted by 23-year-old English artist Eleanor Ponté, the work is not simply about tinnitus. It emerges from a life shaped by it. Rather than a depiction of auditory distress, it is a portrait of adaptation, of learning to breathe through intensity, and of building a meaningful world in the presence of a persistent sound.

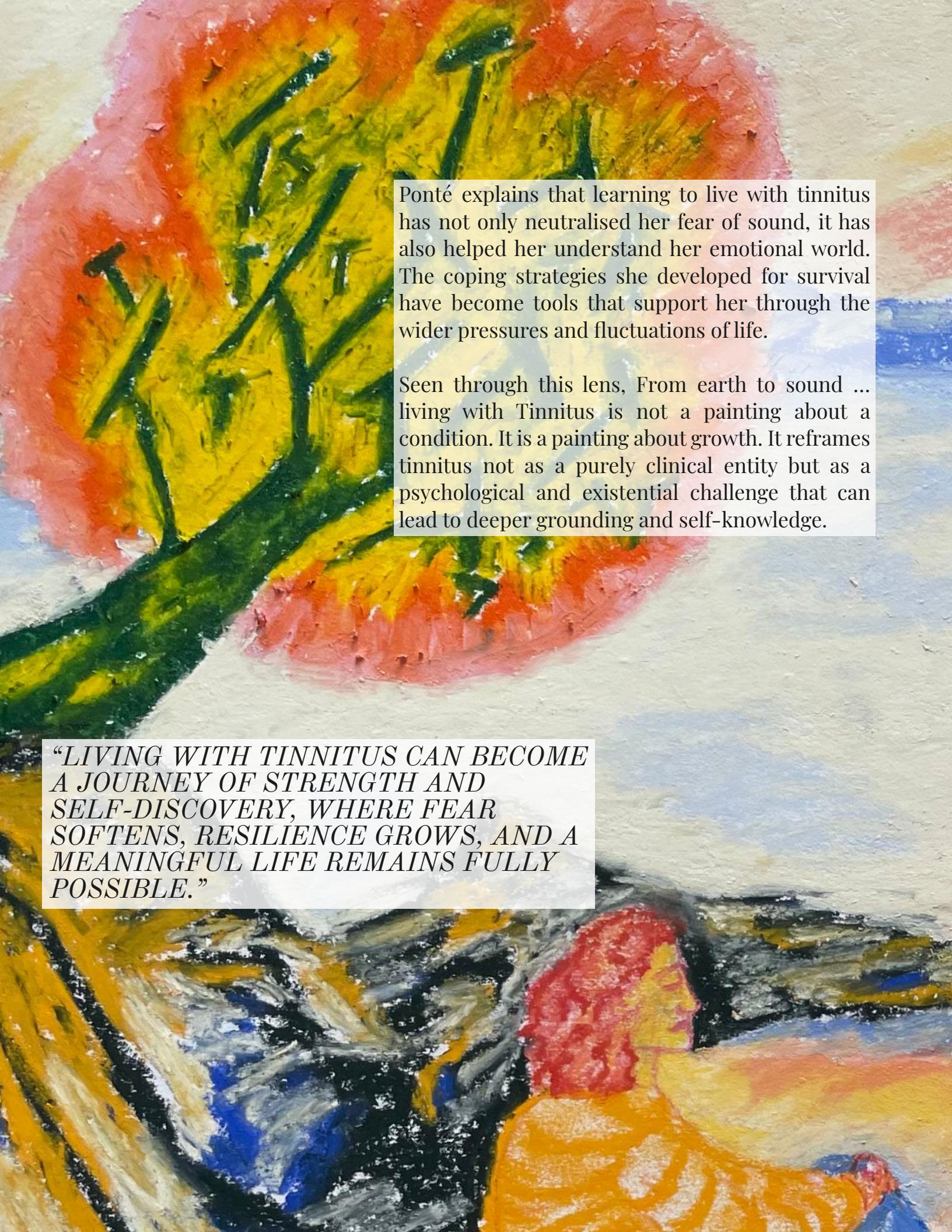
At first glance, the painting shows a solitary figure seated on the ground before a lake, framed by radiant trees and rocky outcrops. Nothing in the scene is quiet. Colour pulses, shapes vibrate, and the air seems to shimmer. The landscape is both beautiful and overwhelming. This paradox, beauty within intensity, sits at the heart of Ponté's story.

The repeated “T” shapes in the trees and across the ground open the door to the painting’s meaning. Ponté explains that she embedded them to show that tinnitus is always around her. It is not something she can step away from, yet it is not drawn as a threat. The trees blaze with colour, their leaves replaced by T-shaped fragments that symbolise the constant hissing she hears. The ground echoes the same marks, showing that tinnitus permeates her environment but does not define who she is.

The figure contains no “T” shapes. Tinnitus surrounds her, yet it does not live inside her identity. It has become a companion she understands rather than an intruder she must fear. Ponté’s journey with tinnitus was not simple. When it first emerged, she recalls freezing in fear during the quiet moments of her day. Silence amplified the panic. Being alone felt dangerous. Over time she found her own path to coping, partly through counselling but also through self-directed methods such as yoga outside, meditation and long walks in nature. She intentionally exposed herself to moments that once felt unbearable. Even placing her head underwater, which used to be terrifying because it intensified the internal noise, became part of her healing. Bit by bit, she came to terms with the condition.

This turning point is captured in the painting. The figure sits calmly, grounded, facing a wide horizon of colour. The world around her is loud and vivid, yet she remains steady within it. Solitude, once a place of fear, has become a place of comfort. She can now sit with her tinnitus without distraction and even draw strength from the experience.





Ponté explains that learning to live with tinnitus has not only neutralised her fear of sound, it has also helped her understand her emotional world. The coping strategies she developed for survival have become tools that support her through the wider pressures and fluctuations of life.

Seen through this lens, From earth to sound ... living with Tinnitus is not a painting about a condition. It is a painting about growth. It reframes tinnitus not as a purely clinical entity but as a psychological and existential challenge that can lead to deeper grounding and self-knowledge.

***“LIVING WITH TINNITUS CAN BECOME A JOURNEY OF STRENGTH AND SELF-DISCOVERY, WHERE FEAR SOFTENS, RESILIENCE GROWS, AND A MEANINGFUL LIFE REMAINS FULLY POSSIBLE.”***

The piece is featured at the end of our annual tinnitus report because it embodies something that graphs and research summaries cannot express. Lived experience does not begin and end with symptoms. Within fear there can be learning. Within disruption there can be strength. And within a world made louder by tinnitus, a person can still find and protect their quietness. Philosophers since antiquity have debated the meaning and moral purpose of art. In *The Republic*, Plato and Socrates argued that art is merely an imitation of reality, a copy once removed from truth. They warned that poetry and painting could corrupt the mind by appealing to emotion rather than reason, and therefore should be banned from the ideal city. Yet this painting contradicts that ancient suspicion. In its imitation of experience, it does not lead us away from truth. Instead, it draws us closer to the inner truth of what it means to live with tinnitus. Research describes the condition, but art discloses the person. Where data traces averages, this work reveals dignity. What Plato saw as imitation becomes here a direct form of knowledge, a way of encountering the lived reality that numerical evidence can never fully reach.

Ponté now describes herself as living side by side with her tinnitus. She takes precautions, honours the methods that helped her find peace, and carries the strengths she gained into the rest of her life. Her experience is no longer a limitation. It has become part of her resilience. From earth to sound ... living with Tinnitus stands as testimony and also as invitation. It does not romanticise tinnitus or minimise its difficulty. It shows that meaning, joy and grounding remain possible, even when the sound remains.



**From Earth to Sound: Living with Tinnitus (Painting by Eleanor Ponté )**