

## Art grads let public in on their creative process



They have been hard at work since returning to the classroom for their high school victory lap, and now local Grade 12 students are ready to lift the curtain on their creative process.

The annual Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, a student-led exhibition of visual and performance art created by Grade 12 students from five local high schools, opens this Wednesday, February 5, at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

On Friday afternoon, student curators were joined at the Centre by Mayor Tom Mrakas, whose office is once again sponsoring this initiative, as well as Cheryl Shindruk of Geranium Homes, co-sponsor of the exhibition, for a sneak preview of the installation process.

The installation was a precursor to the reception celebrating visual arts on the evening of February 5 and a special evening showcasing performance art on the night of Wednesday, February 19.

"We're excited we have been able to include all five high schools this year and having 20 volunteers from the schools here to curate each of the rooms," said Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, during Friday's installation. "As you look around, the themes are very different and the students are coming from different perspectives and the students [here today] have to find a way for all of those to fit and learn those curatorial skills. I am really proud that students take such pride in that and it is so important for them that they get this opportunity to show [their work] in a professional setting."

Also important to Ms. Haines is the chance for students from different high schools to collaborate in ways they might not otherwise have the chance. They can share ideas and perspectives that will hold them in good stead for the future, she says, as they prepare to embark on the next chapters of their lives.

But, at the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, you also get a sense of what matters to students here and now.

One of the things we see every year is how the students express themselves through the art they present and it is a very meaningful art that comes through, said Mayor Mrakas. You actually see and feel what the artist is actually thinking and that evolves from year to year.

Ms. Haines: You get the temperature of what's happening in the schools. We have a social piece with the Australian [bush fire] and now we have art on our wall that reflects that. When the #metoo movement was right out of the gate, we had a whole exhibition about that. That is what they are thinking about and putting on walls. There might be some stuff that is coming that is a bit challenging for people to see, and we need to know that these are the thoughts and feelings we're having in our graduating class. It is amazing we get to see that.

And you have many chances to see for yourself. In addition to this week's Opening Reception and the Performing Arts evening on February 19, the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts runs through February 29. The Aurora Cultural Centre galleries are open Monday through Saturday from 9 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

**By Brock Weir**