

York Region artists keep the Canadian love going in Showcase 2018



By Brock Weir

Last year, the Society of York Region Artists pulled out all the stops to showcase the best of Canada, reflected through their own unique eyes.

But although the Canada 150 year has come and gone, this maple love continues to reign supreme at the Society's (SOYRA) latest show and sale, Showcase 2018, now on at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

The annual event formally opened with an artists' reception on Saturday afternoon and will run through January 28.

"We seem to have a wider variety of styles this year with various media that are being used that we have not seen in the past, which makes for some very interesting viewing," says SOYRA president Linda Welch. "25 per cent of our exhibiting artists are brand new for our organization and we're attracting professional full-time artists to the organizations and that is a feather in our cap. It means that our standards are now widely acceptable and I am particularly proud of the show we have this year."

As the pieces came together, Ms. Welch says she saw a "smattering" of themes, but a definite trend emerged in the field of Canadian landscapes.

"There's a focus on nature and wildlife in many different styles," she explains. "There is high realism and there is abstracted work on the other end of the scale. We also have new photographers who are bringing in new techniques. I believe there was quite a bit of interest in what we tried to do here from the visitors' side [with Canadian work last year] and I have seen, as people come into the show, they ask if there is a Canadian theme, or if we can point them to Canadian artworks, works representing Canadian locations. "From the artists' side, a number of our artists spent quite a bit of time travelling to various locations across Canada, so I see that inspiration represented in our continuing work because once you go to a place and it strikes a chord, you continue to emulate that in your artwork."

Showcase 2018 is one of three major shows carried out by the Society of York Region Artists each year. Next is the 50-year strong Art Aurora, a collaboration with the Town of Aurora, to be held the first weekend in May. This is followed by an autumn show slated for St. Andrew's College the weekend after Thanksgiving.

It's essentially a set schedule with SOYRA followers eagerly anticipating the three shows, but with each year, their audience grows.

"We have a following and the following comes as far away as Toronto, Mississauga and Peterborough," says Ms. Welch. "We have some galleries that are now following us and they come to check out the quality of the work we have and I know there has been follow-up, which is nice for our artists as well. For Showcase 2018, I want art lovers to come and enjoy the colours and moods in each piece."

"I know there is subject matter that is appealing to all ages. We have had families in already with little ones as young as three. We have a People's Choice ballot and even a three year old had a favourite. There is subject matter that is appealing to everyone and part of our mandate? yes, it is a sale but part of our mandate is to bring a little colour and life to our community, so it is a form of entertainment. If they come in and spend an afternoon looking at something that makes them feel good, then we have succeeded because that is what art work is supposed to do: make you think or make you feel, remember something from your past or make you

smile.?