

AHS students share VISIONs of the world



By Brock Weir

As they prepared for the reception last week to mark the close of their graduate art exhibition, artist Jessica Soud helped her fellow student, Madeleine Neufeld, lace up into an intricate network of cables to symbolise the bones inside.

The discarded cables and wires were not simply the closest and easiest materials to hand. Jessica wanted to convey something very deliberate.

‘If you look at humanity today, it is more integrating into technology and that is how a lot of people express themselves,’ she said, looking over her model.

But humanity also tends to express itself through some of its baser instincts. Of Syrian heritage, Jessica says she only has to look to their ongoing civil war to see this in action.

The ‘wearable art’ modelled by Madeleine was just one of a number of pieces Jessica had on show in VISION, the exhibition curated at the Aurora Cultural Centre by Grade 12 students from Aurora High School, which wrapped up on Saturday. Other pieces in her collection included depictions of family portraits, skewing darker to skulls.

Alex Miceli, on the other hand, took her artistic hand to create more comforting images.

‘My theme overall is familiarity and home,’ he says, guiding her model, Jason Saunders, into place.

Jason was decked out from head to toe in artificial leaves – a few patches of green nearly obliterated with the bold colours of autumn – and branches poking out from his body here and there.

‘My two paintings represent things I find comforting,’ Alex explained. ‘I grew up around forests and I really like nature and being around trees. When I thought about doing wearable art, I felt a tree would be really representative of something I grew up with. People often take trees for granted. We see trees changing colour all the time, but I wanted people to think it could be art.’

But, what was the verdict of her art himself?

‘It’s a little bit pokey and I have been hitting people with my branches a lot, but I am wearing it,’ said Jason with a grin.

Each year, 'wearable art' is a hallmark of the AHS show, but this year 'vision' was the overriding theme that emerged from the students' art, said teacher Lee-Anne Moore.

'It is the exploration of that concept on the literal, figurative and symbolic level, examining the world from unique perspectives,' she said at last week's closing reception. 'Tonight we honour the imagination and powerful commentary of our youth and the artists' vision.'

The artists' vision also made an impact on Cultural Centre curator Stephanie Nicolo, who has been working with the students on their self-curated exhibitions for the past six years.

'There is a special place in my heart for the beginnings of this program and as it has gone on over the many different years and with different artists, it has always changed the way I look upon the world because of your very special and unique ways of displaying those parts of the world,' said Ms. Nicolo. 'You have a wonderful knack for creating beauty with really difficult topics. This year we have seen a lot about global warming in your art pieces; there is an interesting perspective on mortality; a few skeletons in the room, but you guys bring something very special to these exhibitions. We are blessed to see these pieces in the gallery.'