

## Art transcends language in winter shows



**By Brock Weir**

Sometimes they have to let their brushes or their needles do the talking.

When they work on a canvas together, sometimes Newmarket-based artists Mahtab Abdollahi, a native of Iran who grew up with Persian as her first language, and Josee Savaria, a transplant from Montreal and native French speaker, can't find the right words to convey their feelings.

‘It works well, so we don't get mad at each other!’ says Abdollahi.

Adds Savaria: ‘We're exchanging using paint and brushes.’

The results of this mutual exchange, which sprung out of the Newmarket Studio Tour, are now on the walls of the Aurora Cultural Centre in the new exhibition ‘Enchanted Realms: A Journey of Magic and Wonder’, which runs through December 19.

It was one of three exhibitions that officially opened at the Centre on Saturday night, bringing together a wide variety of art with threads all connected to a wintry theme.

‘We met four years ago and found we were using the same colour palate,’ says Savaria. ‘Our art was completely different, but we thought it would be nice to work together just for fun. At one point we came here and told Clare Bolton we would love to do a show together eventually, but it was nothing serious. This summer, Clare called us and asked if we were interested, and now it was serious!’

So, they had to get to work picking out the work that complemented each other. Both women are drawn to nature, but take wildly different approaches to their canvas, but somehow they dovetail into a tightly bound show.

‘I just want this to be a pleasure for the eyes,’ says Abdollahi. ‘When they see a piece of art I want them to feel relaxed and happy. People have a lot of stress already, so I don't want to add to it.’

Neither does Aurora-based quilter Angela Krotowski, whose hand-crafted, comforting wall-hangings greet visitors as soon as patrons come through the main doors. Her array of seasonal quilts form ‘Threads of Tradition.’

‘All my quilts have a story,’ she says, outlining one piece called Christmas Tulips which has its origins in the family lore of a good friend who had a great aunt in the Victorian Age who received a hand-carved wooden tulip from her husband each Christmas.

‘Another shows a prairie girl skating on a pond. I am from Saskatchewan and they don't do that very much here!’

Another elaborate quilt illustrates the 12 Days of Christmas, this time from the perspective of its Christian origins.

?We all know the fa-la-la-la-la and all that, but each one of these has a Christian meaning and that is what this is all about. A lot of the quilts I make have a Christian reason for making them. In my head there is something else going on. They all have some kind of meaning. I don't make a quilt just to make a quilt. I want a reason for the quilt.?

