

Artists open up their studios for two-day Aurora tour



By Brock Weir

Over 15 Aurora and York Region artists are putting the finishing touches on new paintings, drawings and sculptures this week ahead of this weekend's Aurora Artists Studio Tour.

Now in its fourth year, the Tour gets underway this Saturday, September 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, September 22 at the same time offering tour-goers the chance to see inside eight individual artists' studios.

Organizing this year's tour is abstract and contemporary artist Deborah Campo who will once again open her James Henry Drive studio to the public. For her ? as well as the organizing committee ? this weekend will be the culmination of a full year's worth of work and organization which began almost as soon as the last pair of feet left their studios in 2012.

?As soon as we finish in September, we end up having a potluck get together of artists to brainstorm over the next year,? says Ms. Campo. ?This year is particularly exciting ? we have a new logo and our website changed. This is the serious month of getting it together prior to the show

?The tour grows, the artists come and go, and this year we have guests from Aurora, Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Keswick and Toronto. What's exciting this year is one of our corporate sponsors is Park Place Manor. They graciously allowed Maureen O'Leary to host Graham Ames, Michael Dwyer, Dianne Hughes, Maya Rodriguez and Dani Madger to share the location.?

Additional artists on the tour include Jean Beard, who will welcome art lovers to 41 Delayne Drive to see her acrylic and multimedia work; Mariana Badescu who will show off acrylics at 250 Milestone Crescent; Stephanie Davidson, also with acrylics, at 73 Stoddart Drive; Christine Valentini with her multimedia work at 94 Old Yonge Street; photographers Margarete and Ralph Brunner at 15516 Leslie Street; Ms. Campo hosting artists Valerie Kent and Laura Brant at 97 James Henry Drive; and sculptor Amir Oveissian at 57 Earl Stewart Drive.

?There is such a large variety this year,? says Ms. Campo. ?Emerging artists are brought in along with professional artists and it gives emerging artists the opportunity to show their work and be embraced in the arts and cultural community.

?We anticipate over the years we generally get a good 150 people coming in through our homes over the two-day period and this is an opportunity for them to see the artists in their own environment, the works on display, and maybe even see the possibilities for commissions.?

In her experience, Aurora is a town that has its fair share of ?very traditional? painters and this year's Artists Studio Tour takes the

opportunity to show off ?contemporary? art and build a greater understanding of less traditional artists with less traditional works.

?I also think the general public is curious as to how an artist lives,? she says.

In planning for this year, the organizers have paved the way for many firsts, keeping an eye on the objective to put their tour and, in turn, the community, on the map. To this end, they have had the tour listed in Curious: the Tourist Guide, reached out to new and different sponsors within and beyond Aurora, and taken the word out to various venues like the Aurora Farmers' Market and the Newmarket jazz+ Festival.

In addition, as Aurora gets ready to conclude its 150th anniversary celebrations this month, the collective artists have collaborated on a new piece to mark the occasion. The finished work will be reproduced on greeting cards and each individual square tackled by each artist represents a ?diversity? of different interests of the public.

?We get people each year who have never gone on an art tour, we get people who come faithfully each year to the Tour, and guests to Aurora from more remote regions of the world,? says Ms. Campo. ?This year, we've invited students out who will be involved in school arts programs to come out and spend their time over the two days with artists in their house to get a broader perspective of their professional life and their work itself.?

For more information on this year's Tour, including information on each artist and maps to their studios, visit www.aurorastudiotour.com.