

Backstories reception to bring art patrons together for first time since pandemic



Our shrunken world during the pandemic caused many people to think about communicating differently ? and artists were no exception.

Artist Andrew Cheddie Sookra's inspiration has always been found in exploring the world, but when options to do so were limited, he looked inward, creating an ?internal dialogue that reflects upon his subjects and their deeper societal connections.?

A painter, sculptor and a fine art instructor, his pre-pandemic and contemporary work now lines the walls of the Aurora Cultural Centre's gallery space at Town Hall and will be the scene for an artistic reunion this Saturday.

On June 4, the Cultural Centre will host a reception for Andrew Cheddie Sookra's "Backstories: The Researching Artist as Traveller & Interviewer" exhibition, providing local art patrons their first opportunity to meet and interact with an exhibiting artist since the winter of 2020

?When we first started (putting together the exhibition) there was an idea he would have mostly landscapes and cityscapes in the show, a lot of stuff that could be done en plein air,? says Samantha Jones, Gallery Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre. Half is figurative work ? paintings of life models over the course of 10 years. It's not the usual work you would see by Andrew but it is work that is really important to his practice.

?He thinks about the world in nature, landscapes, and cityscapes really connected to the people to travel to them and live within them. People are just as important. During the pandemic, as we're coming out of it, Andrew had a little bit of an obsession with portraiture; he was really focused on just casual practice, but it is evolving more in his work. Since February, he has been doing a portrait pretty much every single day?and he's realizing again how much he loves portraiture and this is where the show, I think, has changed [from what we first envisioned].?

Backstories has been on the gallery walls since May 11 and will be in place through July 18. This Saturday, however, is a chance to take in the work with the artist as a guide.

This will be the first reception hosted by the Cultural Centre since the start of the pandemic and they're very excited to welcome people into their space once more.

?It is a very special moment for us to bring people together and view the art,? says Ms. Jones. ?It has been living online and it's nice to step out from behind the computer. We've had so much screen time over the last few years. When we have this much screen time, we get used to seeing images and paintings online on Instagram, but you have to remember there is such a big difference to seeing a painting in person ? how the light reflects on the grain of the canvas or the fact you're able to walk around the sculpture [rather than] be given certain views from someone's camera.

?There's the social aspect, too. One of the great things about going to an art gallery and seeing other visitors or even a reception and seeing other attendees at the reception, you're looking at an art piece and someone will say something about the art that maybe you didn't know at first. It's a nice, social way of engaging people with each other and sharing our interests.?

If you would like to become part of it, the reception will take place from 1 ? 3 p.m.

For more information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter