

Freedom of expression and human beauty is artistic trademark for Roberto Bernal



A passion for art is in the blood for designer Roberto Bernal.

A native of Colombia, his father and uncle helped him develop his eye for the beauty all around him ? and it's an eye that has served him well in his design career, and as an abstract artist in Canada.

Beginning July 31, and running through September 9, his work will be the focal point in the Colleen Abbott Gallery, the second-floor exhibition space at the Aurora Public Library. (APL)

?Breaking stereotypical forms of aesthetics, Bernal mixes materials, techniques and styles to create passionate statements that pay tribute to the beauty of the human body and the freedom of expression in abstract painting,? says the APL.

?The mix of abstraction and figurative in his work is greatly influenced by Latin American artists such as Santiago Cardenas, Luis Caballero, and Fernando de Szyszlo. Bernal's work has been exhibited in solo and collective shows in his native Colombia and in the United States.?

And now, much closer to home.

?I have two little kids and I always bring them over to the Aurora Public Library,? says Bernal. ?They love the Library and I have seen the art up there and I thought, why not? I have been in art since I was young. My brother is a painter and my uncle is a relatively well-known artist in Europe and South America. Visiting him at his house, I was exposed to a lot of art and seeing him work made me want to do it, too.?

He pursued his passion in art school in Colombia for five years, focusing on sculpture and painting and, after that, he says, ?I began looking for my own identity as a visual artist.?

?I have always had a deep concern about painting because that, to me, is like prostitution of art, so I always have been fighting in the pack of my mind ? I paint something that I like, not thinking if other people are going to like that. I am not a painter for myself, I am a painter for others.?

Having a particular interest in mixing modern and traditional art forms, he finds inspiration all around him, and has found a particular affinity with depicting the human body, especially the nude.

?I hope audiences take away something different, something unique, and hopefully inspire them to think of ideas that can be

productive,? he adds of what he hopes people see in his art. ?A lot of the art that is shown is self-taught and more of a hobby than an actual art project. A lot of this is background and theory, not just ?I feel like painting this today,' or ?I like these colours.' There is a lot of theory behind why you should use this colour or why in this place. People sometimes think abstract art is just throwing things around. If people enjoy it, hopefully it inspires all artists that are probably here working in their basements to show something.?

Bernal hopes that this first solo show in his adopted country opens up further doors.

?I am already old and I didn't go through the normal path of regular artists so I don't know how to do it,? he says with a laugh. ?I would like to be shown in the big galleries of Toronto, and it's nice to feel like you're a peer who is part of that community.?

The Colleen Abbott Gallery is located on the second floor of the Aurora Public Library, accessible through its main entrance on Yonge Street.

To see more of the work of Roberto Bernal, visit him on Instagram @robertart71.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter