

## Grade 12 students show off their edgy, angst-y sides in gallery show



**By Brock Weir**

For nearly four days straight, Sharon Fong and her family pored over nearly 3,400 tiny individual pieces of paper, each painstakingly cut into triangles and bringing them into ferocious life.

The Grade 12 Aurora High School (AHS) student has loved folding origami since she was a child, so when she was tasked with creating something memorable as her graduation art assignment, she turned to what she loved.

The stark white colour of the four paper dragons stand out in a sea of colour in the Aurora Cultural Centre's Blue Gallery, which is home to the Aurora High School GRADS 2014 Art Show through Thursday. Student artists had the chance to show off and explain their work to their peers, teachers, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, and art lovers in general last week at a special opening reception.

When Sharon told aficionados each dragon was made out of 836 triangles, many people came in for a closer look at what she dubbed 'Family Effort.'

'It took me about four days straight to assemble the dragons with two hours of sleep in between, but I had help though!' she said.

'That's why it is called family effort because I have a loving family and I love them so much for helping me out.'

The team included her grandparents as well as aunts, uncles, and cousins.

'The fold in a flash! My cousin Sabrina helped me assemble the feet and legs and just sat with me through the night.'

This year's art show is in marked contrast to the 2013 installment. Unlike last year's show, which students had to take into their own hands after labour disruptions between unions and the local school boards scuttled teacher involvement, many observed the works on the walls had a bit of a 'darker' tone.

'It's the angst!' shouted one artist as Mayor Dawe voiced that observation.

Speaking to the assembled crowd during the reception, the Mayor singled out events like the GRADS show as one of the 'driving reasons' for the success of the Centre, providing opportunity for artists, including these upcoming AHS grads who might make their passion for art into a career, to exhibit their voices and vision.

'It is also an opportunity for us, the Town, to have a place where we can come and witness some really unique art and some budding talent,' he said. 'It is an opportunity for us to see what you do and to celebrate the work that you do.'

Unique was certainly the watchword as people came in to get a closer look at the art on the walls, which ranged from classical to

abstract to graffiti, to multimedia sculptures on the floor, a terrarium, and even pieces of wearable art displayed by live models.

Kiana Klinger's Picasso-inspired work was modeled by Emily Sweny who, when she made her way through the galleries, was preceded by a giant pair of red lips followed by an equally giant eyeball on her back.

"I drew a lot of inspiration from Picasso, as well as pieces I drew," said Kiana. "The face was very scrambled and I decided it would be a really good idea to create a giant mass of facial features. I meticulously sewed together foam, painted it, duct taped it and literally making it tonight."

Although it looked rather cumbersome, Emily took things in stride describing her unusual ensemble as "comfortable, more or less," and was comforted by the fact they could fit a drinking straw through the mesh covering her face "just in case!"

Newspapers and graffiti figured into the work of Rihannon Latremouille, culminating in hanging art as well as roughly framed collages that aimed to send a message.

"I wanted it to be really rough and edgy," she said. "I have never done anything really edgy before in art so I thought this would be a cool thing to try, especially spray painting."

For the students, the GRAD art show is the culmination of their visual art at the high school level and the hard work is evident for art teacher William Lottering.

"Each of these works represents to me a process," he said. "I don't look at the final work, but I look at what happened during the production of that work and I remember every bit of struggle and every decision that was made. It is a pleasure to work with kids like this."