

GTA 'Masters' in Georgina collection showcased at Aurora Cultural Centre



Treasures from 'Seven Masters' in the collection of the Georgina Centre for Arts and Culture are experiencing a homecoming of sorts at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

The Aurora Cultural Centre formally opened its latest exhibition on Thursday entitled 'Seven Masters,' a curated show featuring works collected by the Georgina Centre for Arts & Culture (GCAC) since its inception in 2004.

The bulk of the works in question were donated to the GCAC by York Region artist and collector Brue Smith and features works created by artists who might be familiar to Aurora Cultural Centre patrons: Albert Chiarandini, whose work was exhibited at the Church Street School in the Cultural Centre's second show in 2011, and Helen Lucas, who hosted her final solo show at the Aurora Cultural Centre in 2018. Their work hangs alongside those created by Kay Murray Weber, Travis Shilling, York Wilson, Tom Zsolt, and Bruce Smith himself.

'Over a year ago, Charlotte Hale from the GCHC and I began discussing the possibility of an exhibition featuring works from the permanent collection right here in the Aurora Cultural Centre. For some reason it felt right to place this show early in our programming schedule. It felt like sort of a homecoming,' says Samantha Jones, Gallery Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

'Little did I know this decision had already been made before. When the Aurora Cultural Centre first opened in 2010, its second exhibition was entitled York Region Vistas. This exhibition featured paintings by Albert Chiaradini, paintings that just happened to be from the Georgina Centre for Arts and Culture. 'We had no idea that this had been the case until after we announced it to our team, and our Communications Manager Jane Taylor, one of our original Cultural Centre staff members pointed out.'

Once this connection was made, they found even more as they looked into each artist's ties to the area ' and found that the wife of one of the artists, York Region, attended school at Aurora Public School, when it was housed at the Church Street School, the scene of the new exhibition.

'That's why we titled these rooms Homeroom Galleries' because this used to be a public school. In addition to that, we were also delighted to welcome back the works of Helen Lucas. Helen actually opened up her last solo exhibition with us in 2018 that was titled Why Do I Paint Flowers? This was right before our temporary relocation for the construction of the Aurora Town Square projects. Sometimes exhibitions choose us and we just roll with the current it takes us in. We're housing these works for the next two months and excited for our community to experience the work.'

GCAC Artistic Director Charlotte Hale says the donation from Smith amounted to hundreds of pieces, including nearly 200 painted

by Chiaradini alone.

“Bruce Smith donated his own work and over the years other donations have been added either curated in or added in along the way by other significant donors,” Hale says, adding that deaccessioning some items from the collection recently has allowed them to purchase more to broaden their collection. “Following our new mandate of diversifying the collection, we have made some really great purchases. It becomes more dynamic. The collection has become more dynamic and will stay that way, which is a good thing.

“The most exciting thing about a collection, and it happens organically almost, is there is a thread of connection, a thread of storytelling, that seems to pop up suddenly and it is there and intentional when a collection is developing and being presented”. There is always a little moment of magic or connection, or an ah-ha moment, and you are just able to tick in a little deeper to that artist and learn about them. It's a really rich experience when you're working behind the scenes.”

Seven Masters will be on display at the Aurora Cultural Centre through January 26, 2025.

This Saturday, December 7, from 3.15 – 5 p.m., the Centre will host two Exhibition Walk and Talks and on Tuesday, December 17, the Centre will screen an acclaimed documentary on Lucas, “Helen Lucas? Her Journey ? Our Journey?”, with doors opening at 6.30 p.m. Tickets to the screening are free, but must be reserved in advance.

For more information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/seven-masters.

By Brock Weir