

It is due north as Watercolour Society marks an 'historic' first in Aurora



By Brock Weir

Pauline Holancin and Jake Mol are two artists who find their most vivid inspirations in the sights and sounds of nature.

Every year, they travel to a lake to take in the scenery, the wildlife, and everything nature's bounty has to offer them. This year, however, nature threw them a curveball with a bounty of snow and not much else – a difficult task for two well-known watercolour painters!

But the popular artists and teachers, a husband and wife duo who have called Aurora home for the past 32 years, are old school in the sense they don't have a small tube of white acrylic paint in their arsenal to depict the snow. They rely on the white paper to tell the tale.

'Watercolour is considered to be the most difficult medium, so a lot of people have gone on to do acrylic and mixed media because there is an opportunity to paint over and do things,' says Pauline. 'With our transparent watercolours, it is all or nothing. We're traditional die-hard painters!'

Their efforts now hang side by side at the Aurora Cultural Centre in an exhibit of over 100 paintings from members of the Toronto Watercolour Society in the group's first show in Aurora.

In fact, 'Aquavision 2014', the Society's annual Juried Exhibition and Sale is a first not only for Aurora, but the furthest north they have ever brought their talents.

'This is historic in that sense,' laughs Margaret Roseman, founder of the Society. 'We have quite a contingent of our membership right now in the north.'

The Toronto Watercolour Society boasts members of a wide spectrum of talent and experience. They have those who paint just as a hobby as well as professionals who do this for a living.

Ms. Roseman was first made aware of the Aurora Cultural Centre through Society member Nancy Newman, who regularly uses the space for art classes. With the venue for their 2014 art show secured, making the selection from the abundance of work produced and submitted for the show by Society members fell to King-based artist Ernestine Tahedl.

It might have been an unenviable task for Ms. Tahedl, but she gives a knowing smile saying it was an 'honour to be asked.' An honour, perhaps, but she was tasked with whittling down nearly 150 submissions to fit within the space at the Cultural Centre, a task

which some thought she would not be able to do ? including herself.

?I lost a bet because I didn't think they would be able to hang all of them,? she says. ?There were a lot of entries, so I had to cut them down, unfortunately. As a whole, most of the work was technically quite good. The next step is looking for specific thematic interest and originality where the personality from the artist comes through. The main criteria was probably thinking outside of the box.

?I was here 20 years ago with this organization and I am amazed by how it has grown. It is wonderful to see an art organization become so prosperous and have so many more members. Quality has grown with the professionalism and it is very nice to see that.?

Exhibiting artists take great pride in being on hand to show their work, talk about their inspirations, but some also take pride in carrying on a proud tradition which some might feel is slightly on the wane. They hope the show inspires people to pick up the brush and move away from acrylics and oils, at least for a little while.

?Funnily enough, I think when a lot of people start painting, they start with watercolors, but lately you don't see as many people doing it,? says Ms. Tahedl. ?It is not an easy medium, so I hope they get back to it again.?

Aquavision runs at the Aurora Cultural Centre through April 26.