

Johnston offers glimpse behind the cartoons at APL next week



Scott Johnston's editorial cartoons in *The Auran* have kept readers laughing for a quarter-century, but Johnston's cartoonist lens extends well beyond the issues of Aurora and next week you can get a glimpse into his creative process at the Aurora Public Library.

An array of Johnston's non-editorial cartoons are now featured at APL's Colleen Abbott Gallery through March 28. This Tuesday, March 3, however, Johnston will offer an artist's talk beginning at 7 p.m., illustrating both how he gets his ideas and how the final product all comes together.

"One of the things I really enjoy about doing the non-political cartoons is that I get to do them on anything and everything," says Johnston. "When I do the editorial stuff, I have to restrict myself to Aurora or thereabouts. When I do the non-political cartoons, I can do them on animals and pets, mythology, fairy tales, arts, literature, science, holidays, historical figures, aliens, trees, inanimate objects — just about anything and everything. And it's very liberating to be able to think of a cartoon about trees when the next cartoon you do is about pirates, or Rapunzel or something like that. It's a lot of fun to be able to let your mind wander and to pick and choose across a wide variety of subjects."

When Johnston was invited to curate the exhibition, he started with 100 of his favourites and whittled it down to the best 35 to account for the available space.

He made a concerted effort to ensure a wide variety of subjects were represented.

"It was fun to revisit a lot of the cartoons I hadn't looked at in a while and a challenge to pick them out because, of course, they all tend to be your favourites," he says. "When you put so much effort into them, you kind of have a soft spot for them all, so it's a bit hard to pick and choose, but, in the end, we came up with a good cross-section."

In recent years, Johnston's work has been exposed to audiences well beyond Aurora, whether through his social media profile or the five volumes of non-editorial cartoons he's published. It's a journey he says has brought a lot of "rewarding" feedback.

"When you're cartooning, it's like you're kind of drawing them for yourself, what you feel is funny, but you don't often get that immediate reaction," he says. "When I put the cartoons in the paper, it goes out, people read the paper, but I don't necessarily know if they thought it was funny or that they got the joke, or thought it was insightful, or anything like that. In getting a wider audience, it's nice to see that my cartoons are universally appreciated — I get feedback from folks from across Canada, the States, Europe, Australia, and all over the world. It's really fun to think that people on the other side of the world are enjoying the work that I have

done.

?I just want people to have fun with this show. It has been a long, cold winter here in Aurora and I think people are looking forward to the spring and being cheered up a bit. I'm hoping these cartoons will bring smiles to folks' faces, and that they'll have some fun looking at cartoons that they may not have seen before.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter