

King artist hosts solo show at Aurora's Royal Rose

In what's heralded as 20 years in the making, a King artist is hosting a solo exhibit in Aurora.

Anni Bretschneider and her exhibit "Twenty Years in the Making," runs September 7-14 at the Royal Rose Art Gallery on Yonge Street.

Bretschneider said the positive response from people of her early work was "very unexpected," earning her some top spots at the Schomberg Spring Fair.

This helped spark her own passion, following a lifelong captivation with watercolour. She took weekly classes and painted in her living room 4 or 5 days a week.

"I couldn't get enough. It felt relaxing and quiet inside a busy life," she says.

She was asked to teach and that sent her in another creative direction. She said teaching helped her practice and understand more about her craft and she taught exclusively in watercolour until 2016. She now also teaches acrylic and mixed media.

"The most profound discovery I made over these 20 years is how deeply our art and creativity is integral to our being. There is more depth, meaning and connection in the creative process than we know."

That realization happened in 2017 when she took a full-time Expressive Arts Certification at the Haliburton School of Art & Design.

"The experience changed me, deepened my intuitive voice, expanded things artistically and adjusted the emphasis in how I teach art to include our inner creative voice. This new show is partly born from that time."

Bretschneider started a new business called Creative Act Art in 2019, an "umbrella" connecting people to making art. This new direction included wanting to show new work in a new way.

The "Jill-of-many-trades" considers herself to be a creative soul, artist, gardener, lifelong learner, upholsterer, "Heart Warrior," painter, walker, ocean adorer, hockey player, nature lover, and more.

She noted through her art, she doesn't tell the classic story of painting since childhood.

"The thread of my story is having a lifelong passion for watercolour art and instead soaking in and deeply admiring the creative expression and work of others from afar."

In 2004, she immersed myself in painting. Humble beginnings with references grew into a completely open-ended intuitive approach with an emphasis on play, experimentation and exploration.

"I brought this philosophy to teaching art classes. Beginning in 2015, mixed media, art journaling, nature earthing, meditation and writing drew me."

She noted that a full-time expressive arts program, completed in 2017, was a game-changer.

"My creative experience underscored the vital potency and healing aspects of expressed art, poetry and movement as dynamic aspects of the core Self. Creative Act Art is a multi-platform creative endeavour and the next iteration of a creative life. I work in community with like-minded business owners offering opportunities to create, play or heal with art. We bridge creativity by offering retreats, art classes, art healing events, social art/paint nights and original art.

Watercolour is her first love, but over that past eight years, her media and artistic expression have grown. Since 2016, nature, meditation, art journaling, mixed media, acrylic and collage have become part of her artistic repertoire.

?Working with these mediums allows me to be much more open-ended and intuitive during the creative process. If I can stay curious and get into a good flow, even the sky isn't a limit,? she says.

She began with painting mostly flowers and still life, as well as landscapes and old buildings. People seem to recognize her florals, use of colour and texture. Flowers are part of this Series, all created without references. Her new work is acrylic and some mixed media.

?Really, I'll paint anything.?

In her new series, she relies completely on her own intuition or sense of things.

Bretschneider noted that around 2014-2015 when she stopped teaching regularly, something began to change.

?Art has taught me to stay fluid. It truly is a journey with ups and downs, ebb and flow, getting filled with inspiration and resting. I never imagined that I would do anything but watercolour. There are periods of growth and then consolidation. The creative path is like life, dynamic, ever evolving, shifting and morphing. We need to stay adaptable and receptive and to just keep going.?

She uses journals to create in and has too many to count. I use many different media such as acrylic, inks, collage, image transfer and mixed media and anything to mark a mark. She enjoys the freedom of working intuitively and being in a creative flow.

Bretschneider is also a big believer in experimenting, to try new things and see where it goes.

?You can have fun playing during the learning process. It's the best way to do it. To enjoy the process and try to let go of the outcome a little.?

Visitors will also see some abstract pieces in her exhibit, something the artist points out may look like child's play. ?It's anything but. It isn't as easy as it looks. For all the challenge many painters face with watercolour, abstract work is that plus some. It's a growing edge for me and I love a challenge.?

Bretschneider said interest is running high for her exhibit, which is ?really amazing.?

Bretschneider hasn't shown her work in more than a decade, so this promises to be treat, for followers and newcomers alike. She recalls her first solo show as in 2008 at the Grackle Coffee Shop in Schomberg.

She has participated in Arts Society King's Studio Tour and the Schomberg Street Gallery, as well as Art Aurora and SOYRA.

?Twenty Years in the Making? features acrylic and some mixed media. It is a culmination of many hours of creative work over the past five years.

?I dove head first into acrylic, mixed media, staying with the learning curve of new approaches, tools, colour combinations and texture. It's been very interesting. It's humbling and gives you new fuel to move forward.

This is a completely new body of work in acrylic with a little collage and other media. There are many florals, which people know me for. Some pieces are the largest she's ever worked on.

?The art seems to be made right out of thin air. It feels like there's an aliveness to this series of artwork. Texture, light and warmer

colours. It all came from inside, like memories and impressions bubbling up. Each piece of art seems to have its own story. Many florals, but also some which are abstract, some landscapes. They show up as a feeling in the shape or colour or how my imagination sees a transition between some texture, random shape or colour.?

Bretschneider believes art is a perfect metaphor for life. It teaches you about flow, adaptability and redirection, focus, sensitivity, being more carefree, open and playful.

By Mark Pavilons