

Perennial Darkness art exhibition will end with open-mic afternoon

For some, the darkness of the winter can't be behind us soon enough. Others, however, see the 'brighter' side of the darkness, from early sunsets to a sense of coziness.

Since the beginning of December, more than two dozen visual artists and writers have pondered what winter means to them through Perennial Darkness, an exhibition hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre at Town Hall curated by gallery manager Samantha Jones.

'As the heavy, slumbering blanket of winter is gradually pulled over the land, flattening flower beds and stripping trees into a state of dormancy, prolonged periods of darkness hover; laying influence on the natural rhythms of its inhabitants and to no exception, the artists within,' says the Centre. 'Artists in this exhibition bring forth their personal connection to the renewal of shorter days and longer nights; some making work specifically for the show, and others with work already coincidentally prepared; the theme being a subject of their regular practice. For the duration of this exhibition, the gallery serves as a temporary home for the products of the artists' dreams, memories, feelings, observations, and contemplations, as triggered by the darkness of this season's nights.'

'Visual artists have been joined by members of the Writers' Community of York Region who have created written responses to the works on display, coming together in a dialogue on the evocative season.'

Art lovers have until January 27 to take in the works of the collective, but that final day will bring an extra special treat: an open-mic afternoon for members of the Writers' Community to read their written responses and for members of the public alike to get in on the act.

'This open mic event really started off from the collaboration we did with the Writers' Community of York Region (WCYR),' says Assistant Gallery Manager Adora Lau. 'They worked with us for the exhibition in creating poems through this artist-poet gathering and there was just this shared dialogue between the two art forms. As a result, there was just this beautiful combination between visual art and also written art being exhibited at this show.'

'The WCYR was so enthusiastic and their strong creative energy just really helped add an extra layer to this exhibition and we wanted to give off a really big thank you for their participation in the show. Following [their] readings, there will be time for anyone interested in performing, and it could be a song, poem, or any written creation. It's not limited to creations in response to Perennial Darkness.'

Perennial Darkness, says Lau, started as a curated exhibition of artists that resulted from an open call in 2023. Anyone within the community at any stage in their career was welcome to submit their artwork for consideration and exhibition.

'Perennial Darkness is a celebration of earlier sunsets and longer nights during this time of the year and each artwork is a reflection of the individual elements brought out by each artist during this state of darkness,' she says, adding participating artists range in age from 23 to 86. 'There was no particular element that brought all of these artists together because a lot of these artworks were made individually or specifically for this show but, overall, they were just speaking from their own perspective that they were really focused on during the state of wintertime, of darkness, earlier sunsets.'

'One artist, Emily Andrews, created a self-portrait that was particularly relatable for many artists and viewers - just featuring her covered in a blanket, talking about how there is a tendency of shutting away and hibernating during the state of wintertime and separating one's self from reality - just as a way of gathering thoughts and preparing for the winter season.'

If you haven't yet taken in Perennial Darkness, the show is on now at Town Hall through to the grand finale on Saturday, January 27 at 3 p.m. Anyone interested in taking part in the open mic portion of the afternoon is asked to register with Samantha Jones before the event by sending an email to samantha@auroraculturalcentre.ca.

The exhibition continues virtually through February 9. To view the show online, or even to purchase a work, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/perennial-darkness.

?We want to thank artists for their participation and their work is really what made this exhibition come together and take form as it is today,? says Lau. ?A big thank you to the Writers Community of York Region that collaborated with us. Their strong energy, enthusiastic response, initiative, really added an extra layer to perennial darkness and we couldn't have done this without them as well.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter