

Rose Zhao's meticulous paintings featured in 'From Rocks to Brushstrokes' exhibit at Aurora Cultural Centre's Great Hall Gallery



Rose Zhao peered across the crowded hallway of the Great Hall Gallery on Thursday night and appreciated what she saw.

Speaking through her daughter, Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee Grace Wong, and her grandson Jerry Jiang who both served as translators, the geologist-turned-artist appreciated the dozens of visitors who took in her exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

'So many friends from all different directions have come here tonight' that makes me very happy. When I was sleeping at night, I was worried that not many people would be here for the exhibition. It's beyond my expectations to see so many.'

Zhao's numerous admirers took in her radiant works of art which are created using traditional Chinese ink painting on rice paper which are then framed on scrolls. As her daughter Grace noted, 'The exhibition is particularly special as it is the first at the Aurora Cultural Centre to be presented in both English and Chinese' revealing the rich, cultural diversity of our community.'

The community was taken by Zhao's fine and detailed painting style, reflecting her decades of work as a geologist which enabled her seamless foray into painting in her retirement.

Zhao confirmed the detailed drawings she made as an engineer and geologist have contributed to her success as a painter.

'This art is very time-consuming and detailed just as the work of a geologist is. As a geologist, I had to master skills of sketching wilderness, rocks, layers of soil, flowers, many kinds of plants' so many items appeared in the sketches. Every single item as a geologist and a painter takes lots of attention to detail.'

Madame Zhou's life journey' in part captured in the title of her show 'From Rocks to Brushstrokes: A Geologist's Artistic Transformation'' has seen her reside in many countries including the United States, Canada, and China.

Her favorite work of art displayed on the second floor of the Aurora Cultural Centre connects her to her Chinese roots.

'My favourite painting is 'The Celestial Aura of China's Flowers'. I like its vibrant colors. I needed to paint ten to twenty layers to create the effects in this painting.'

Samantha Jones, the Great Hall Gallery's Manager, welcomed guests to the Summer Hallway Exhibition by noting that it was a 'celebration of creativity and we couldn't be happier to host this event.'

Jones introduced Zhao who charmed the attendees by stating 'This is a moment that I will always treasure. Despite your work schedules, you took precious time to be present.'

One of those guests present at the opening was Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena who avowed that 'I have a lot of respect for the arts.'

'When I see the art presented here, it reminds me that we're celebrating the remarkable journey of Rose Zhou. The art we're enjoying tonight provides a sanctuary for us and this collection is a tapestry of memories—a celebration of endless possibilities and a precious gift to our community.'

Jones amplified Cobena's insights into Zhou's artistry in a post-exhibition discussion.

'Rose's productions are so diverse—her backdrops have these meandering paths, especially in her New Jersey landscape work 'Overlooking Manhattan' where she's created a map based on the view from her apartment window. There is this theme of reclusiveness to the piece, but all her paintings are offered in the vibrant Gong-Bi style which translates into 'meticulous'. They're all so beautifully-detailed.'

Other dignitaries present at the opening of the 'Summer Hallway Party' exhibition were Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora Councillors Ron Weese and Wendy Gaertner, Richmond Hill Ward 4 Councillor Simon Cui, and Aurora Sports Hall of Fame President Javed Khan.

Light refreshments—including sponge cake, a seasonal berries fruit cup, and tea, coffee, or lemonade—were served to and enjoyed by attendees.

'From Rocks to Brushstrokes: A Geologist's Artistic Transformation' runs from July 31 to October 30 at the Great Hall Gallery of the Aurora Cultural Centre at 50 Victoria Street.

Visit www.AuroraCulturalCentre.ca/Gallery for more information.

By Jim Stewart Local Journalism Initiative Reporter