

Shifting Reality show is culmination of more than 25 years of artistic collaboration



They found a kinship through creativity and their unique outlooks on the world, and 25 years after their first meeting, they're letting respective 'realities do the talking,' in a new exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Shifting Realities, a gallery show featuring the work of local artists Eva Folks and Judy Sherman, opened October 30 in the Homeroom Galleries at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

'25-and-a-half-years,' corrects Sherman as Folks explains how they first joined artistic forces at Chameleon Decorative Arts Studio, a store once run by Folks on the southeast corner of Yonge Street and Dunning Avenue.

They developed an instant rapport and, before too long, Sherman became an instructor in the Studio, and their creative collaboration only went from strength to strength.

As artists they are very active in the community, including workshops hosted by the Aurora Public Library. This exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre, however, is a first for them ' and a long-time coming since it was first planned just before the global pandemic hit.

The world may have changed since then, but their worldviews haven't, as viewers of Shifting Realities: Adventures in Portraiture will see.

'Presented as a double-solo exhibition, the show highlights their shared flair for humour and character-building through paint; Folks in acrylic, Sherman in oil. Blending realism with a touch of surrealism, their new works invite viewers down the rabbit hole into their two boldly-inventive and unfettered artistic minds,' says the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Folks, a long-time Aurora resident, has been a full-time artist since 2011 and has won numerous awards for her surreal work. An art teacher for more than 15 years and a current instructor at the McMichael Gallery for Canadian Art, Sherman has become known for her tongue-in-cheek paintings, mostly of animals that aren't as warm and fuzzy as they look on the surface.

If you look closer, a bird sitting on top of a cow's head might be wielding a knife ' while a painting of a polar bear enjoying a tropical cocktail in front of a blazing orange sunset might just have something to say about climate change.

'For me, it's all surreal ' it's always surreal,' laughs Folks. 'Whether it's animals driving cars or people in odd surroundings ' or just a little bit off, the show is called Shifting Realities and we've just shifted things a bit.'

Adds Sherman on what inspires her, "It just kind of happens. I think for me, because they're narrative paintings, I realized that being in graphic design and marketing, my stuff has always been narrative through the years. Now it's just with animals, what's going on in the world, and just making people aware of what's happening out there."

"They just tell stories; it's all about telling stories."

And, if you can make an impression, so much the better.

While *Shifting Realities* began taking shape before she joined the Aurora Cultural Centre team, Gallery Manager Samantha Jones says she has vivid memories of seeing the works of both Sherman and Folks as a child when her mother first took her to the Aurora Art Show & Sale.

"It's almost a shifted reality growing up now that I'm in the role of putting your art in the gallery that I manage," Jones told the artists as they began installing the work. "I think I've learned a lot about you two as a relationship and I think this show is really about how artists meet each other and how they kind of subtly or maybe subconsciously feed off each other and grow from each other. I think artists need each other to grow and exist. Imagine what you'd be if you didn't have each other. It's probably still great work, but it helps you grow."

"This show kind of comes at a good time because we need more comedy in the world to handle those harder topics. It's how you (Sherman) approach difficult issues like environmentalism and animal rights - you do it in a way that's very graceful but makes people feel welcome to talk about those issues and be comfortable, so this is carving out a really good space for that. And with Eva's work, what's really powerful is, I think, when you become an adult artist, you almost get afraid to totally unleash your imagination and go into those really weird corners of your brain - and I like that you don't have that barrier."

Sherman agrees, offering: "I think it's true we can change the world in very soft kind of ways, in different ways, and I want people to see that, too - a different view, a shifted reality, a different view, and let them take away something a little different, even if it is just for a little while."

Shifting Realities is on now at the Aurora Cultural Centre through January 17, 2026.

On Friday, January 2, the exhibition and its artists will be at the heart of a New Year's Art Jamboree from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., an interactive workshop where, on a first come first serve basis, all materials will be provided. All ages are welcome.

For more information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/shifting-realities.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter