

SPEAKEASY

By Jane Taylor & Reccia Mandelcorn

The relationship between viewer and art was thematic to this month's Speakeasy. Guests Nelia Pacheco, Aurora Film Circuit, and Nancy Newman, Society of York Region Artists, spoke about how art challenges us to think, engage and feel.

Nelia chairs the Aurora Film Circuit. One of Aurora's premiere cultural treasures, the AFC is a volunteer initiative committed to enhancing art and culture in Aurora with transformative cinematic experiences.

Working with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) the AFC has been bringing critically acclaimed Canadian and International films to Aurora since 2006.

As a member of the programming committee, Nelia selects the films to be screened. As she quickly learned, selection cannot be just about what she would personally like to view. Balancing community sensibilities and interest for the 'feel good' entertainment films with the darker, more controversial films, can be a juggling act.

For Nelia, if viewers leave an AFC screening a little more thoughtful, entertained, engaged and occasionally, even perhaps provoked, then they have grown through the magic of filmmaking.

The AFC's eight-film season runs January to November. Season subscriptions for 2019 have sold out, but 50 single tickets are available at the Aurora Public Library for each screening. For more information about the Aurora Film Circuit and upcoming screenings, please visit aurorafilmcircuit.ca.

This January, the Aurora Cultural Centre is curating a juried exhibition of the Society of York Region Artists. The show, From Memory, features 38 members of this vibrant local artist collective. As part of the month-long celebration, the gallery team has collaborated with the artists in a series of informative and entertaining 'Ways of Seeing' art events. The first event is a walkabout with watercolour artist, Nancy Newman.

For artists, a walkabout in a gallery is a familiar activity, but for the non-artist, this might seem somewhat intimidating. Nancy explained how, through critical thinking, thought and conversation around a piece of art doesn't require an advanced degree; in fact, engaging with art is accessible from childhood on.

Nancy hopes that viewers will interact beyond casually walking by a piece of art. The walkabout will give a foundation for ongoing interpretation of art, encouraging the viewer to experience intent, colour, form and design, developing a greater understanding of the nature of art and of themselves.

The Walkabout with Nancy Newman takes place at the Aurora Cultural Centre Wednesday, January 16, from 6 - 7 pm, and is offered at no charge.

Rounding out the visual arts scene is Rick Armstrong's photography exhibit, Highway 510 Labrador: 21 days in my truck. Rick has driven across the country photographing the landscapes of Canada as he experiences them in the moment. Highway 510 Labrador is a loving tribute to photography and to our country. On exhibit at the Colleen Abbott Gallery, Aurora Public Library, through February 10.

On the music scene, don't miss out on the first 2019 Great Artist Music Series with pianist, Charles Richard-Hamelin, on Friday, January 18. Special pre-concert talk with Rick Philips. Plus, warm up on a cold January night with classical jazz standards when John Sheard presents a tribute to the great Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. With special guests Donovan Locke, Kalya Ramu and Michael Louis Johnson, Friday, January 25 will be an evening to remember. Tickets available through auroraculturalcentre.ca. Also happening at Aurora Public Library is a Youth Coffee House featuring teens from The Arts Music Store on Saturday, January 26 at 2 pm. Come out and support local emerging talent. Information on performing in the open mic segment is available through the Library at aurorapl.ca.

With so much going on in our own community, 2019 promises to be a year of fabulous cultural experiences. Happy New Year Aurora!

Jane Taylor is Communications & Events Manager at the Aurora Cultural Centre, and Reccia Mandelcorn is Manager of Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. They co-host The Speakeasy on the first Wednesday of each month on 102.7 CHOP-FM.