

Williams students prepare to unleash the power of art



By Brock Weir

Abigail Kearney is ready for battle.

As the co-chair of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School's Arts Council, she knows that artists like to procrastinate just a little bit.

But it's crunch time. Many students use this time of year to relax and regroup before heading back to the schoolroom grind in January, but these young artists have just a couple of weeks to finish their striking art pieces before their art exhibition opens at the Aurora Cultural Centre on January 6.

As they put the last touches on their art, they're not just creating feasts for the eyes, they are also looking to make a statement as they prepare to take on the world after graduating this June.

'Art is something I think has a huge impact, whether it is visual arts, music, culinary arts, dramatics, or anything like that,' says Abbey. 'I think a lot can be said through art and what is really exciting about our show is we're just trying to show art is something through which you can change the world and you can express yourself in so many different ways. It is one of those things where your emotion can be expressed so clearly through and people can have such different interpretations.'

'Our show is just about demonstrating how art can change somebody's life and how it can be used to show creative purpose.'

As projects are completed and she and Kylie, her co-president, get a sneak peek at the art to come, they are seeing this social activism component of the show quickly take shape. There is a bounty of pieces on world hunger, a significant number of pieces on violence against women, the LGBTQ community, and 'bringing a light to issues' that might not be popular, but are certainly prevalent.

While Abbey might be co-president of her school's Arts Council, her artistic interests lie firmly in the musical realm, with a passion for dance. The talent for visual arts 'photography' is Kylie's passion. That being said, helping curate a show like this has provided Abbey with a unique learning opportunity.

'Looking at the artwork that has been created I have learned so much about the world,' she says. 'Just the amount of energy people have put into their pieces is incredible. As someone who stands by and watches them do it, it is crazy. The amount of passion and thought that goes into a single project is incredible and in terms of coordinating the event, I have definitely learned that it takes a lot more than you think it does.'

?I have always expressed myself in other ways. I dance about 12 hours a week and have found it is something that helps me release emotion and stuff like that. It is amazing to see people express it in different ways. Seeing it is just so inspiring. When I see the artwork, I feel the same way I do when I am dancing. It is the same level of inspiration, the same level of emotion, the same level of awe.?

This is the second year Williams' outgoing crop of art grads are taking over the Cultural Centre galleries, this time sharing the space with their fellow east-of-Yonge high school, St. Maximilian Kolbe. Stephanie Nicolo of the Aurora Cultural Centre is providing the students with a curatorial helping hand and she too has found inspiration in the pieces she has seen so far.

?What we are seeing is an organic growth of this high school program and more and more elements beyond visual arts being involved,? says Ms. Nicolo. ?At the Cultural Centre, we're not just about the visual arts; we're about all the arts. What is so intriguing for the future is there are going to be more components, more spoken word, more musical elements, more poetry, and even more dance in music. These elements are going to find their way into the high school program come January.?

In our next issue, The Auroran will catch up with Grade 12 art students from St. Max, who are looking to go out with a splash.