

Michal Manson Memorial high school exhibition turns 24



By Nate Smelle

On Jan. 7 the Michal Manson Memorial High School exhibition returned to the Art Gallery of Bancroft (AGB) for the 24th year. The annual exhibition showcases the artwork of young up and coming artists from three high schools in the area. Students from North Hastings High School in Bancroft, Madawaska Valley District High School in Barry's Bay and Haliburton Highlands Secondary School in Haliburton each submitted 10 to 15 pieces per school for selection for the exhibition. Beginning in the early 1990s, the student exhibition was renamed in honour of artist and AGB committee member Michal Manson in February 2010 after her passing.

The opening reception was held on Saturday, Jan. 10, bringing out artists and art lovers of all ages, with many of the artists featured in the show in attendance. Don and Victoria Koppin of Don Koppin Contracting sponsored the exhibition, while local artist Allan O'Marra acted as juror. With a tremendous amount of talent on display in the exhibition O'Mara had the difficult task of evaluating and critiquing each artist's work before delivering this year's list of winners.

The winners of this year's exhibition are: The award for best photograph went to Katelyn Craig for her photograph *Red Tube*. Craig also received an honourable mention for her photo *Dew on a Tulip*. The award for best painting in show was given to Naomi Russell for her piece *Heart of the Sea*. Artist Jacob Mountney also received an honourable mention for his piece *Music Head*. The best drawing in show for 2015 was awarded to artist Victoria Archibald for her ink on paper triptych entitled *Three Trees*. Artist Beth Foster's ink on paper drawing *Happy New Year* also received an honourable mention. A special mention also went out to: Shae McNaul's intaglio print *Titanic*, Ciani Biasini's painting *Fierce Animal* and Cassandra Luckasavitch's block print *The Keys to Life*. The winner of the Special Juror's award for 2015 went to artist Samantha Douglas for her drawing titled *Arctic Soul*. For this honour Douglas will receive a private one-on-one lesson with O'Marra.

As a special addition to this year's show, the artwork of local artist Shannon Schutt returned to the gallery walls. Schutt said she was very grateful to have her work back on display in her hometown. A long-time volunteer with the AGB, she considers the support and friendships she has attained through the gallery as instrumental in her personal evolution as an artist.

?I would suggest that every young artist spend as much time as they can in their own community,? said Schutt.

?Not only will this help them grow as an artist, but it will give them valuable experience for their future endeavours. Shows such as

the Michal Manson Memorial annual high school exhibition are out there to act as a launch board for these young artists.?

Interested in art for as long as she can remember, Schutt knew from a young age that she was a creative person because she always felt the need to make things.

?I'm inspired by the people I interact with; the beauty that can be seen in every individual. My family and friends are also very inspiring, every kind word helps to nudge a young artist forward.?

In 2013 she continued her affiliation with the AGB as a volunteer administrative assistant. This experience, she explained helped her to obtain work as an administrative classroom assistant at the Sir Sandford Fleming College Halliburton School of the Arts where she is currently studying. Recently completing her diploma in visual and creative arts, she is about to begin studying the ancient art of blacksmithing.

For Schutt, art does not just have to be about creating paintings, drawings and sculptures, it is also about community.

?Art helps to build a sense of community in the way that we get to celebrate each other's creativity, learn from one another, and take pride in one another's abilities,? said Schutt.

?Such as the pride that was shown when Bancroft was voted Ontario's Most Talented Town. Bancroft fosters a welcoming atmosphere for those that are artistically inclined. We have many artistic venues and events that showcase the wares of these creatively minded people and bring us all together as a community.?

The Michal Manson Memorial exhibition is on display at the AGB until Jan. 31.