

Art gallery hosts double show



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By Chris Drost

Friday, June 7 proved to be a very busy time at the Art Gallery of Bancroft as a steady stream of family, friends and appreciators of art, spilled into the AGB for 'A Sense of Place,' an exhibition of the work of Barbara Allport and Julie Withrow.

Barbara Allport, former AGB president, described by current president, Hugh Monteith as 'a blossoming artist,' has found time to hone her artistic skills after a hiatus of five years. Her artist's statement says, 'I try to give life and reflection to the things on my canvas. I hope the viewer can share an appreciation for the places I paint.'

Allport stated, 'Recent research shows that 80 per cent of the wetlands on earth have disappeared. These wetlands are home to animals and food for others. We are destroying our ecosystem. In Ontario, seven out of eight species of turtles are at risk, in part due to the diminishing wetlands.' Referring to her body of work, largely focused on wetlands, she added, 'I wanted to put them on canvass for the energy they bring.'

Allport also included a few paintings of 'memorable interior and exterior spaces that have moved me.' She said, 'These spaces felt lonely without someone to bring them to life.'

Allport thanked everyone in attendance and especially those who had travelled from such a long distance.

Julie Withrow and her husband, Alex Jack, who won the Best in Show at the 2018 juried competition, stumbled upon the AGB during one of their camping trips to the area. They live in Centreville, near Kingston, which Withrow describes as having 'lots of cows but no art gallery.' Although born in Victoria, Withrow made her way to Winnipeg at age 13, to Toronto by age 22 and then on to the Kingston area.

Withrow says she is not an outdoorsy person and so she largely relies on her husband's photos as the inspiration for her work. She says, 'My husband takes photos for me to work from while I listen to CBC.' While she has been making art for almost 40 years, she has concentrated on landscapes for the past decade. 'Although I work from photos, I try to present the landscapes as spontaneous as I can,' she explained.

Withrow uses oil stick for her paintings and works it like oil paint. 'You can mix paint and apply it with a palette knife.' 'I like to work quickly and small, without rain or blackflies,' she added. 'The goal is to evoke a feeling of being outdoors among the trees, fields, skies and streams,' according to her artist statement.

Withrow thanked everyone for attending and for the 'nicely hung show.' She summed up her feelings about the AGB very simply, 'This gallery has a very welcoming spirit.'

Monteith concluded the evening's presentation by offering special thanks to the show sponsors, Leilah Ward, Ernest Grell and Ingrid and Hugh Monteith. He also acknowledged Freddie Towe and Ken Fraser for beautifully mounting the show, Sara Lang, Carol Kirby and Chris Jenkins for the wonderful table of food, Graham Blair and Dalila Obregon for help with the wine table and Barb Miller for looking after memberships and sales.

In AGB news, Monteith said there will be two workshops in July, a jewellery workshop with Michelle Bruce and one on watercolour painting.

Monteith happily announced that the AGB received Employment Canada funding this year for a summer student. Hannah Crawford has been hired for this role.

Current refurbishments to the gallery include repainting of the sign and work at the kiosk across the street, spearheaded by John Kirby. The work on the kiosk is a shared project with the Village Playhouse, according to Kirby.

Monteith concluded the evening with two reminders, the AGB is completely volunteer run with no government funding and annual memberships are only \$20 per person. The gallery will be open on Sundays during the summer now they have a student employee in place.