

Bancroft and area Autumn Studio Tour returns for its 31st year



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Back for its 31st year, the Bancroft and area Autumn Studio Tour delighted attendees with the various wares on display by artists of various disciplines along the tour route last weekend. The tour continues this coming weekend, on Sept. 23 and 24. Bancroft This Week spoke with several of the artists on the tour and requested comments from the others. For more information on the tour, including artists' studio locations, go to www.bancroftstudiotour.org or their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BancroftAreaAutumnStudioTour.

For over three decades, the Bancroft and area Autumn Studio Tour has been delighting art lovers, both local and from afar. This year, the participating artists on the tour are as follows; stone artist William Kafka, painter Nancy McKinnon (who is a guest at Kafka's studio), multi-discipline artist John Olesen, wood artist Lyle Collins, quilter and mosaic artist Joanna Hankus, who shares a studio with photographer and musician Michael Hankus, painter Patrick Doherty, painter Allen O'Marra, painter and printmaker Ketha Newman, doll artist Teena Surma (who is a guest at Newman's studio), upcycler (creative reuse through sewing) Lucky Maloo (Miriam Hookings), potter Amy Doole, potter Stephanie Park (who is a guest at Doole's studio), painter Freddie Towe, painter Barbara Allport, painter and sculptor Ken Fraser (Allport and Fraser are guests at Towe's studio), painter Ken Balmer, painter Bob Pearson aka kry's bradley, glass artist Karen Istead, stained glass artist Emily Istead (E. Istead is a guest at K. Istead's studio), painter Harry Langford, and photographer Daryl Phillips.

Karen Istead and her niece Emily Istead had their glass art and stained-glass art respectively displayed at their outdoor and bunkie studios on Sept. 16. Emily says that the preparations went smoothly and she has no complaints.

?I would say it's been a positive experience so far. I'm looking forward to meeting with people who are interested in all the art that will be displayed,? she says.

Karen said that it was going pretty well but it was fairly quiet because of the sunny weather.

?A lot of people are probably out there enjoying the last hurrah [of summery weather],? she says.

Karen says it took the whole year to prepare for the tour and that it was the biggest event for her for the year. She says she and Emily

set up all day on Sept. 15, getting ready for opening day. Karen and Emily can be reached at kistead0@gmail.com and ekathryn224@gmail.com respectively.

Olesen produces wood, canvas and 3-D art and says that after a bit of work, they are all set for the tour. He can be reached at jolesen1@bell.net.

?[We have] lots of new pieces including paintings, coloured work and wood turnings. My gallery is so full of hope the weather cooperates. I like to see tourists treated to a beautiful outdoor spectacle. This is a post COVID-19 show, so it's been a few years for me. I hope the sad state of the economy doesn't affect things negatively. I'm glad we live up here,? he says.

Lucky Maloo says the first weekend of the tour went well and she had lots of visitors from as far as New York City to nearby neighbours she says she hadn't met in their 22 years living there.

?This is my first time on the Studio Tour from my home. I was a guest some years back at nearby Ketha Newman's [studio]. I'm so happy I took the plunge. It's a lot of work preparing and it's worth it. Connecting to new people, getting helpful feedback on my work and building a customer base is awesome! Usually I sell at local markets, primarily in Maynooth and I found that focusing on the art tour has helped me hone in on that aspect of my work. I like to think I've grown as a result,? she says.

Pearson, aka kryz bradley, can be reached at krysbradley13@hotmail.com. He says that this was his first time participating in the tour and that overall, the setup time for his studio took a couple of weeks. He reveals that the artists canvassed the community for approximately three to four months dropping off the tour brochures promoting it to local businesses.

?Saturday was quite busy and I have interest in one painting and a possible commission. There were approximately 26 attendees on Saturday. Sunday was much slower with only 16 attendees. Three were from the U.S., from three different states. One was a summer resident visiting with her friends. I am quite pleased and look forward to next weekend's tour dates. I received tremendous positive comments throughout the first two days. So far, a very positive experience,? he says.

O'Marra is painter and he can be reached at haomarra@gmail.com. He reveals he grew up in the area and spent lots of time at the family homestead over the years; a vintage schoolhouse in the Maxwell Settlement, purchased by his father in 1955. He inherited it in 2009 and has lived there permanently since the passing of his mother. He's joined the studio tour for the first time this year.

?So, it's going to be interesting to see how tour visitors respond to my high realist oil paintings and if I might be able to sell a few of them. For the first time in my career, I am reducing prices of older works and have lots of more recent full-market pieces on display as well. I also have copies of books I've published as well as a poster I have had printed of one of my paintings. So, I have been very busy getting all the preparations complete and I'm really geared up for the tour patrons who will be stopping by over the next two weekends!? he says.

Kafka is a stone sculptor and can be reached at bkaf1@outlook.com. He says that the weekend was great weatherwise and that the people that stopped by always take the time to listen to his short descriptions of the stone carving process and are amazed at the Earth's colourful stunning geology.

?It's always important to thank your guests for supporting and coming to enjoy the tour and the many talented artists in our region. My expectations are met when we have such a good guest turnout,? he says.

Collins is a wood artist and can be reached at lyle.collins2@gmail.com. He creates one-of-a-kind salt and pepper mills and shakers, end tables and stands, charcuterie boards, burl lamps, coat racks, mug tree stands and more from wood sources from his property. He says he's hoping there's a good turnout on the tour as he's done lots of work to prepare for it.

?I enjoy the studio tour as it gives me a chance to display the live edge furniture I make. They are too large and precious to be transporting to craft shows and markets!? he says.

Joanna Hankus, who is sharing a studio with Michael Hankus (on Instagram @hankus_visual), says that she's extremely busy, but that her preparations are coming along and it is a bit easier this year since it's her second year and she knows what to do and where. Her work can be viewed on her Instagram page @joartyslife.

?I organized a June show for the Bancroft Studio Tour at A Place for the Arts so I can say that I have more experience and confidence now, and I think I can help with activities like that in the future for sure. I was trying to advertise this show in the GTA a bit, by distributing brochures in some places and reaching out to larger groups on social media. We will see if it works. For sure, I'm hoping that the weather will cooperate with all the artists! she says.

Towes says that they have been prepping for the tour all year, but the setup didn't take as long.

?We already had the setup from last year, so we just cleaned it up and used it again. So, it was a day of getting all the art up for the tour, she says.

Towe can be reached at freddietowe@gmail.com, while Fraser and Allport can be reached at kfraser344@gmail.com and barbaraallport@yahoo.ca respectively.

Balmer says he had 50 people come by his outdoor studio on Sept. 16, which was about half of the people that came by on the first day of the tour last year. He can be reached at kbalmer@rethink-group.com. He says he also sold eight paintings on the first day of the tour last year versus two paintings this year.

?I'm painting all year and I'll have 30 to 50 paintings at any given time. Some of those I'll decide not to take to the gallery and keep them here for this show, he says.

Surma is a doll artist, and can be reached at teenasdolls@gmail.com. She is a guest at painter and printmaker Ketha Newman's studio (www.kethanewman.com, ketha@kethanewman.com). She uses paper clay and fabric to create unique dolls. She says it's hard to believe that summer is over and the studio tour is this weekend.

?I always look forward to this tour as it's a great time to catch up with art lovers.?