

Becoming the Light at the Art Gallery of Bancroft



By Sara Gottardi

On the enchanted evening of Friday, June 5 the Art Gallery of Bancroft welcomed artist Mary McLoughlin from Peterborough into Bancroft and the AGB for the first time ever. Leading the way for open conversations and peaked interpretations, marvellous oil paintings of her flowers hung in a beautifully simple but elegant comprise on the AGB walls. Gracious spacing between each individual piece set an atmosphere of a blissful swirling temperature. As if you were in McLoughlin's garden back home having something refreshing to drink while sitting outside looking around a field of open beauty. The room quickly filled with inquisitive eyes and wide open mouths filled with questions as well as wonderfully prepared finger foods. McLoughlin impishly, but excitedly greeted everybody upon their arrival to her first open show in Bancroft titled, *Becoming the Light: The Art of the Flower*.

McLoughlin was born in Windsor and primarily raised in Oakville. Across from her house, was a forest where she loved to play endlessly and also where her mother would always venture with her. McLoughlin considered herself to be her most comfortable and free there - in the forest in the springs time. She fell in love with art at a very young age she says, and like her mother loved to paint. Although, her mother did not pursue her art further after few paintings she'd made, mostly consisting of portraits (and being a gardener,) few also of landscapes.

Some of McLoughlin's favourite art styling's to watch closely and gather inspiration from are the likes of: Chiaroscuro, an Italian fashion of painting that presents a bold contrast in lighting and backgrounds, and by definition meaning: light (chiaro) and dark (scuro). Also, enamoured by the Caravaggio style, who was an Italian painter prominent in the fifteen hundreds which combined a realistic and observatory state of being into his works together.

‘I like those dark backgrounds and the theatrical lighting,’ she said about the two similar styles.

McLoughlin spoke not only about her love of art, but also her love of being in meditative states while creating something, how it blesses you. In a moment, a feeling can truly wind you and lead you into another world, another realm. Sometimes while mentoring others in her studio she forgets she's even teaching as she reverts into her more solitary self. At times she'll be demonstrating something and automatically stop speaking, in the middle of a class while she's still front and centre but she's in the zone: creating! Painting is McLoughlin's ultimate form of meditation she shared giggling at the fact of her more quiet and quite shy personality. She sings in the local choir in Peterborough and enjoys it at most as her main source of human interaction. She enjoys reading Lao Tzu, a philosopher-poet of Ancient China. She looks often to him for positive affirmations and reflection sayings to help relax and take in the world around herself more.

McLoughlin said, ‘you have to have a strong sense of self to be alone. I need that time alone,’ as she also took a few minutes to herself before her presentation for her own show.

Overwhelmingly thrilled and excited to have come to the AGB for the first time to speak about what the flowers mean to her, she'd said, ‘The flower for me is a symbol of receptivity and creativity. It spends all this time trying to reach up out of the ground for a couple of days that it gets to reproduce, so it opens to the sunlight. I would like to think of myself that way, that I'm open to the light as well. The flower is me, and I am the flower in various situations.’ The middle of the flower is said to be the reproductive part of

flowers she mentioned to which is how she's been able to feel connected to the flowers, throughout their similar to same experiences and feelings.

Her mother definitely had a huge influence on her she'd said. Always sharing knowledge about flowers and their Latin names, attempting to teach her, although, regardless McLoughlin confided that only until now that she's never remembered their names. But it is her old high school teacher-mentor, Mr. Domm, who she's admired profoundly, saying, 'he wanted me to go on to become a professional,' and regardless of her parents desire for her to become a teacher - which later in life she did obtain a degree for) - she knew that if she was to be a teacher she wouldn't have become a professional artist at all.

'He was a powerful figure in my life. There were others, but he was the main one,' McLoughlin said.

Graduating from the four year fine arts course at the University of Toronto in 1973, McLoughlin said, 'I had a groundbreaking moment at the University of Toronto, and for me it was learning to use the historical techniques of the masters. I don't know that I would have gotten that anywhere else,' she said. Learning the very fundamentals of creating oil to paint herself was like 'going back to medieval times. Gold leaf and egg tempera, the early stages of oil paint, which was mixing powder and oil with turpentine,' McLoughlin explained. She carries that experience close with her wherever she goes and finds it as her fondest memory.

Mary McLoughlin's, *Becoming the Light: The Art of the Flower* will be showcased at the AGB until Friday, June 27.