

Laurie O'Reilly's Earthscapes opens at the AGB



By Chris Drost

In what has been described as a "visual feast," a body of work by artist Laurie O'Reilly was unveiled in a new exhibition called *Earthscapes* on April 6 at the Art Gallery of Bancroft. According to the show description, it is unlike any AGB show before and it will leave viewers exploring each piece with wonder. O'Reilly combines wax encaustic, sculpture and painting techniques to create a response to the state of our planet in the artist's eyes. She describes herself as a storyteller. "Telling stories compels me to problem solve. Whether my mind wants to solve construction puzzles, the need to problem solve drives my sensibilities, my thinking, and my narrations. When, what I am observing in the present, whether vulnerable members of society or fragile ecosystems, meshes with my past life experiences, I am motivated to devise artistic methods that can help me work through the angst that these overlaps bring to the fore, and tell the stories I need to see and feel," says O'Reilly. "My work with wax, my collection of found objects (discarded or forgotten) my father's failing eyesight and my concern for our future, helped direct my path towards these dimensional constructs. I have photo-montaged, cut, pasted, and painted. I have created paper clay supports, sewn into painted canvas, reassembled pieces and found objects into new statements; layered, waxed, glued, and bolted. I anticipate the materials chosen speak to intent. For example, "Earth Skin" is fragile and references the flora that the Earth supports. It incorporates handmade paper and found bits of floral detritus embedded in beeswax. The "Elemental" pieces are my most recent works. They speak to our need to stop riding roughshod over the planet and allow the ancient elements to re-establish the Earth's gifts," explains O'Reilly. O'Reilly was raised predominantly in Niagara Falls and spent time travelling extensively as a young adult. She received a BSc with a minor in Fine Art from the University of Guelph that gave her hands-on experience and technical skills. She continues to learn through workshops, mentoring and residencies. O'Reilly operates The Artspace Gallery on Eagle Lake Road in West Guilford during the summer months along with her writer husband, David Skinner. She has exhibited her work in many fine exhibitions, including the Carmichael Canadian Landscape Exhibition, a Rails End Gallery solo show in Haliburton, the Grand Bend Art Centre juried exhibition and the Bukhorn Fine Arts Festival, among others. This is her fourth curated gallery show. The AGB would like to thank the sponsor for this exhibition, Wilson Timber Mart. Special thanks go to the volunteers, photographer, Harold Eastman, caterer, Pat Huddart, the installation team Ken Fraser and Wendy Hewko, and the AGB curatorial committee. *Earthscapes* will be on display through April 29 at the AGB located at 10 Flint Avenue in Bancroft. The AGB and Out of the Box Gifts is currently open Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.