

David McIntosh: Painting the Figure



By Nate Smelle

The official opening of local artist David McIntosh's exhibit, *Painting the Figure* brought together a large crowd at the Art Gallery of Bancroft on the evening of Friday, Oct. 2 to see his latest collection of creations. After graduating from art school in 1997, McIntosh spent a great deal of time painting the figure, however he said it wasn't until he moved to Bancroft that he started to carve out his own groove as a painter.

"When I got here I started to paint the forests, and boy did I find my voice with the bath of light coming through the forest canopy, and the interpretation of that in colour. But when I wasn't living in the woods any more—which was the case at about this time of the year in 2010—I really couldn't do it anymore, no matter how hard I tried."

In an effort to rediscover his voice he tried to paint a variety of different subject matter. Living in Toronto at the time he started painting nightscapes of the city after noticing its beauty on his walks home from the pub each night. Next he began painting aerial views of buildings in an attempt to disengage. Eventually finding his way back to Bancroft he then began painting the bird's eye view from the Eagle's Nest lookout. It was at this time that he was approached to do a show at the AGB.

The primary intention in these paintings, McIntosh said was to make a collection of clothed and nude figures in the same impressionistic style he used in the series of forest paintings he created between 2004 and 2012. He considers life drawing a foundational element of art-making and has continued this practice since leaving school to keep his "seeing" skills sharp.

"I kind of like these paintings which isn't always the case with me, but I like them even more now that I've seen them hung again," said McIntosh.

"If you know my forest paintings—which I did for about eight years—these might seem like a huge departure. In a way I guess they are because they deal with the figure instead of my beloved trees. In another way they're not that much of a departure because they are still dealing with light and shadows, and the interpretation of that in colour."

If he had to describe the series in one word, he said he would use the word *Eros*; because it speaks best to the vitality, sensuality, mystery and sexuality of the human experience he has captured in this series. McIntosh said the day he realized that he could create a painting without having to analyze it first was one of the greatest days of his life.

"Colour is the main thing that fascinates me," McIntosh said. "I was an engineer first and I was always good at mathematics, so I began seeing colour as a huge three-dimensional matrix of possibility. At first it was analytic as I needed to consult the colour wheel; then it became intuitive."

The show is sponsored by Ashlie's Books in Bancroft and will remain on display at the Art Gallery of Bancroft throughout the month of October. To see more of McIntosh's art visit his website at www.davidmcintoshstudio.com.