

Gertrud Sorensen: naturally inspired



By Nate Smelle

Finding inspiration in the forests, lakes and highlands surrounding her studio and home in Whitney, artist Gertrud Sorensen has used her paintbrushes to capture the beauty of nature for more than 30 years.

Beginning her artistic journey through the eye of 35 mm camera, Sorensen first felt the urge to express her appreciation of nature in paint when she realized how many beautiful moments she had preserved in her photographs.

Experimenting with watercolours to start, she moved onto acrylic before arriving at her medium of choice: oil.

Growing up in Innsbruck, the capital city of the Tyrolean district of Austria, Sorensen's love for nature began in the mountains.

Immigrating to Toronto in her early 20s, she soon found herself exploring many of the landscapes in and around Algonquin Park that once inspired the Group of Seven to create.

She became a permanent resident to the area along with her husband Fritz when they purchased Bear Trail Inn resort which is now known as The Couples Resort.

"I have always loved being in nature," she said.

"Ever since I was a child I have enjoyed spending time in the mountains, the forest or by the water. It's why I moved here."

Sorensen said she tries to paint outdoors with other artists as much as possible.

She finds great enjoyment working in close proximity with creative people while immersing herself in nature. She also finds the experience artistically enlightening.

"It is wonderful to paint with other artists together in nature; you really learn a lot," said Sorensen.

"You can pick up a lot of tricks when you paint as a group. Sometimes even holding your brush in a different way than you usually do can make all of the difference in the world."

Heading out into the wilderness with her art supplies, Sorensen observes her surroundings until she finds a view that motivates her to express herself.

When she finds one of these very special places and moments she sets up her easel, lathers up her heavy brushes with oil paint and begins her creation on location.

Studying her paintings one feels the deep connectedness that exists between the artist and her favourite subject: nature.

"When I paint a landscape I feel like I am a part of it forever," she said.

"I want my paintings to make people feel like they are there enjoying what I am seeing and experiencing."

Painting with her fellow artists from the Eastern Ontario Art Association (EOAA) on many of the group's en plein air painting excursions, she has come to cherish these moments of creative collaboration.

As an executive with the EOAA for the past 25 years, Sorensen has established an annual member's exhibition at the Algonquin Park Visitor Centre.

Her work can be found in private collections and galleries across Canada and around the world; on display everywhere from Algonquin Park to Denmark. A wide variety of her naturally inspired creations are currently decorating the Art Gallery of Bancroft, which is hosting a retrospective of Sorensen's paintings.

The opening reception for the show was held on Friday, Aug. 7 and will remain on display until Aug. 29. Sorensen's art is also online at www.gertrudsorensen.com.