

Local wood artist inspires with his handiwork



May 6, 2020

By Michael Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

One of Bancroft's strengths is its artistic and creative spirit, featured in the works of photographer Harold Eastman, stained-glass artist Ada Tinney, poet Kathy Figueroa and many others. No wonder it was labelled 'Ontario's most talented town' by TV Ontario in 2004. Another one of these artisans is David Ferguson, a local wood furniture maker and artist who is hosting a new exhibit of his work this June at the Annex Gallery, located in A Place for the Arts, our local non-profit arts co-operative. Ferguson has lived in L'Amable, just minutes south of Bancroft, for about 20 years. Before that, this Ryerson graduate in Media Studies was a successful photographer and did art gallery installations in Toronto. Nowadays, in addition to his woodworking, he does gallery installations at the Art Gallery of Bancroft, was the president of the AGB for one term and has done trim work in local area homes. He also participated in the Bancroft and Area Autumn Studio Tour for five years. A Place for the Arts Kim Crawford thinks he's an exceptional artist; 'His creations are stunning and unique, yet often functional and practical. He is a wonderful person, generous with his time and friendship,' she says. Ferguson's skills as a carpenter are self-taught, and he began honing them while still living and working in Toronto. His home and woodworking shop are solar powered, while a wood boiler heats the water for his hydronic radiant in floor heating system. Another storage building dries his locally harvested lumber like elm, maple, cherry and ash with a passive solar air dryer. Stains he uses are environmentally friendly and have low or no volatile organic compounds. While Ferguson lives almost entirely off the grid, using solar and wood power for most of his energy needs, he does admit he has a generator handy. Some of his tools won't run effectively without it. 'So, if I run a 220 tool in the shop, the generator kicks in,' he says. Ferguson's

Annex Gallery show will display his woodworking mastery, even if the COVID-19 restrictions are still fully or partially in place. I can handle the complications from that. We shot a video of the installation that will play in the window of the gallery, and we can also take visitors by appointment, so if we have to take people in one by one, we can do that, he says. People can inquire about access at woodword2020@gmail.com. The video will also be available on A Place for the Arts Facebook page. Starting on June 6, visitors to the gallery will be treated to 10 pieces from his collection, which he has created over the last three years. The show will be called woodWord, and Ferguson says he's looking at the way we think and the way our brains work. I think we need to understand better how our minds and thinking actually work if we are to effectively deal with the immense challenges that our species is facing socially and environmentally. I'm putting that on wooden furniture. So, I have a hall bench with a lid on it, with a haiku on it that says; Gloves, hats, on or off, the fog of culture stays on, fitting close as skin. There's a dining table with a panel of text running along the centre of it and draping over the edge with repetitions of words from the different senses we use, and then four of the major forces that I think are extant are painted on the legs; radiation, entropy, consciousness and gravity, he says. And there's a number of other pieces. There's an existential mirror, a coat tree of enlightenment, a timepiece and some containers that are motion activated and rotate. But the wood is only the entry into the work, according to Ferguson. It is really musings and thoughts he has encountered when hearing and reading about how minds and brains might be working. The exhibit is funded by an Ontario Arts Council Exhibition grant, and Ferguson has a couple of more applications in the works for future shows. Who knows? They might fund me for further work. It's kind of a long shot, but I'm going through those hoops again. I did that back in the late 1980s and 1990s, and it's changed a bit since then. But apparently, I'm still making some stuff that's of some interest, he says. A Place for the Arts' Jane Ferguson comments on the upcoming exhibit; I am very excited to see David Ferguson's Art Install this June and the video by Dan Schmidt so that everyone can experience woodWord from our front window. If we can't bring the public inside, we can still experience David's woodWord at a safe distance! Of course, we are all hoping for a little relaxing of the closures of non-essential businesses. I have always loved his furniture, clean lines and sometimes a little whimsy. The inlay of words in wood is unique and adds to the attraction of the functional piece. This art install takes his work so much further, she says. I look forward to the interpretation of his work in June.