

PAiNtDEMIC at Art Gallery of Bancroft



By Kristena Schutt-Moore

There is a PAiNtDEMIC at the Art Gallery of Bancroft. The exhibit by Ketha Newman officially started on Friday, Aug. 5 with a grand opening. The paintings and sound works on display are designed to show Newman's experiences living in the rural North Hastings area during a global pandemic.

Newman said that when she came up with the idea for the PAiNtDEMIC exhibit she asked herself, "what were the trends and behavior and activities locally and, more generally, in Canada and the rest of the world that arose in response to the COVID-19 crisis?"

The goal that Newman was hoping to achieve was that the subject matter and themes of her paintings will be relatable to many people who live in the surrounding area. She wanted her pieces to feature what brought comfort and helped people cope during the unprecedented time of social isolation and uncertainty.

For Newman the pandemic lockdowns and social isolation afforded time to study with the natural world more intensely. Many of the paintings on display featured pure landscapes and botanical studies, while others that reflected and explored the trends that occupied

many people's attention during the pandemic such as bird watching, seed starting, puzzles, word games, even items such as raising chickens and making maple syrup for the first time. One of the larger paintings features Newman's recreation of a quilt her great-aunt Olive had made for her, while other smaller paintings feature a single flower.

Newman also created a sound collage that she designed to complement the themes in her artwork and further explores the activities and routines that many people had day to day for the past two years both inside and outside the home. The sound collage will be constantly played in the art gallery during the exhibition.

"My aim is to join both visual and audio cues to create an in-depth representation of my world in the anxiety-filled shadow of covid-19 and because we all are in this together. My hope is that it resonates with gallery visitors by presenting a shared experience of a unique time," said Newman.

The PAiNtDEMIC exhibit will be on display at the Art Gallery of Bancroft for the month of August and visitors are welcome to come in and view the displays and see how well Newman captured the past two years in her work.