

Second week of Bancroft Studio Tour has muted artists? reaction



By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bancroft and Area Studio Tour returned for its second weekend on Sept. 28 and 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is the 33rd year for this popular art tour, in which locals and tourists travel around to the 25 artists at 16 locations in town and surrounding area. More information on the tour, including a map of the artists' locations, and biographies on the participating artists by fellow artist Allan O'Marra, can be found at www.bancroftstudiotour.org. The Bancroft and Area Studio Tour was back for its 33rd year, and featured artists in many different artistic disciplines. They are; potter Amy Doole (amydoolepottery@gmail.com), potter Stephanie Park (sparkpottery@gmail.com), painter and printmaker Ketha Newman (ketha@kethanewman.com), upcycler Lucky Maloo aka Miriam Hookings (info@luckymaloo.com), painter Kathleen Kosloski (khkosloski@gmail.com), painter Abigail Cook (abigailcookartist@gmail.com), painter Barbara Allport (barbaraallport@yahoo.ca), painter Clasina Weese, printmaker Ardea Prentice (ardeadianablade@protonmail.com), painter Ken Balmer (kbalmer@rethink-group.com), painter Robert Pearson aka Krys Bradley (krysbradley_13@hotmail.com), painter Lynne Vegter ([lynnevegterart](https://www.facebook.com/lynnevegterart) on Facebook), painter Ingrid Whitaker (tikkitorches@hotmail.com), stained glass artist Karen Istead (kistead0@gmail.com), stained glass artist Emily Istead (ekathryn224@gmail.com), painter Nancy McKinnon (rockwoodartstudio@gmail.com), jeweller/designer Michelle Bruce (botglass7@hotmail.com), potter Karen Gray (thepottersstudiogallery@gmail.com), photographer Daryl Phillips (darylscottphillips@gmail.com), photographer Michael Hankus (michaelhankus@gmail.com), painter Allan O'Marra (haomarra@gmail.com), painter Patrick Doherty (416-579-4229), painter and printmaker Irina Shestakowich (irina@irinaprints.com), woodworker Lyle Collins (lyle.collins2@gmail.com), and painter Harry Langford (harry.langford123@gmail.com). Allport, Weese and Prentice were at Allport's studio on Hershel River Road. Allport is primarily a landscape painter working in acrylics and is influenced by the forests, wetlands, rivers and lakes all around her. Weese produces abstract works in oil and cold wax, while Prentice works in watercolours on cotton canvas to create her artistic creations. Allport says it was going well on Sept. 28 and was busier this weekend than last. "Anyways, we're having a good time and meeting lots of really

nice people. That's half of it, meeting people and talking about your work. They want to know, they want to know what your process is, that kind of thing," she says. Allport says she's been preparing for about nine months with a focus to produce enough work and they meet as a group a couple of times through the winter to talk about tour related matters. "It's a pretty good group of people. A diverse group of people and artistic examples. There are more [artists] this year than the last couple of years. A lot of new people came on during the winter and that's great. It's a commitment. You kind of have to know what sells, what your clientele is looking for and you have to make sure you're working all year getting ready for it," she says. Weese says it's her first year on the tour so she's never done it before. "It's been good. I've gotten a lot of good positive feedback which keeps the confidence up. And then I've had a couple of good sales, so that's been really wonderful for me. It's just fun talking to the people. One lady said to me 'your mind is really interesting' and I laughed and said 'is that good or bad?' and she said 'oh, no, it's good!' But it's been fun meeting people and people who are into art," she says. Kosloski paints in acrylic using impressionist, abstract and expressionist styles at her studio on Hybla Road. She says she's had more people this weekend than last weekend and said it had taken a couple of weeks to get ready for the tour. She says she's inspired by the Impressionists, abstract artists and she had a great art teacher in school. "It's something I decided to take up later in life and now that I'm retired, I get to do it every day," she says. Some of Kosloski's paintings, like "River over Time" and "Standing Stones" are inspired by archaeology. "Every time I travel, I always go to every archaeological site I can find, so there's a lot of paintings that are based on that," she says. Living in Ireland for six months also inspired and influenced Kosloski's painting. "It's so beautiful there," she says. George was at Kosloski's studio with Darlene, Clayton, Judy and Elvira, and said this was their first stop. "We read about [the tour] weeks ago. I always find the locations interesting as well as the studios," he says. Collins and Langford were at Collins' studio on Bronson Road. Collins creates unique salt and pepper mills and shakers from wood sourced from his property and also does tables, charcuterie boards, lamps, coat racks and more. Langford is a contemporary art painter working in acrylic, oil and resin and uses a variety of techniques like Dutch pour, resin manipulation and more brush work to get desired effects in his work. Painting since he was a youngster, he says he's inspired by everything from the outdoors to online and by the work of Jackson Pollack among others. Collins, who's been on the tour for about five years, says he cuts a lot of wood as he has a wood furnace, wood cook stove and a wood fireplace. He says he always looks at a tree differently than most people due to his art and thinks that "oh, there might be something in there I can use." Once piece, a table, he let the wood spalt or decay to a certain degree before it was cut. "There's a fine line between decaying and spalting and rotting so you have to watch that," he says. Collins explains that spalting is when a tree has died and different bacteria are going to decay it and turn it into soil eventually, but it's a long process. "So, I cut it down, took it to a sawyer who sawed it and I got some neat pieces out of it," he says. Lisa and Jim were there at Collins' studio from Midland, and Lisa said they were so excited to be doing the Bancroft Studio Tour. "This is our first tour. We just bought a house [locally] so we're really enjoying it. It's a lot of fun!" she says. O'Marra, who paints in a high realist style, has his studio on Maxwell Settlement Road across from South Boundary Lake and has been painting there for years although his family lived there since 1955. He's been on the tour for two years and this year became the chairman and coordinator, taking over from fellow artist Ketha Newman. As mentioned, he did the biographies of all the artists on the tour and helped coordinate the promotion of this year's tour. He says he prepared for a year for this year's tour and had 19 paintings on display for it. As a result of a show that he had at the Art Gallery of Bancroft three years ago, he came to the conclusion that this area, especially around his studio had become his muse since he first arrived and that he was "living by my muse," which became the name of that AGB show. "I remember when I came in 1955. I was at Bird's Creek School in grade 1. When we came here in June, 1955 and I climbed out of that 1951 Ford and on the side of the road there, and looked at up, and the smells, the heat, the lake and the hills and the views. I remember even as a child just having my breath taken away and that infuses the muse as well, so it's a lifetime of infusion," he says. As for other inspirations and mentors, O'Marra says he took a trip to New York City and saw the beginnings of the hyper realism movement back in the 1960s and 1970s when abstract art was in fashion. He says he admired the work of artists like Chuck Close, David Hockney and Jack Chambers, who painted in this hyper realistic style. O'Marra points to a painting he did of his daughter Emily, who's also an artist, when asked about a favourite painting he's done. "So, I had a picture I'd taken of her face and I'm a big fan of a genre of art called pre-Raphaelite," he says. The pre-Raphaelites sought a return to the abundant detail, intense colours and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art, rejecting the mechanistic approach adopted by Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo, and thought the classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the term pre-Raphaelite. "And so, I loved the pre-Raphaelite painting and I put my Emily's face into it. I love the piercings and the pearls here, right. That combination. It was a really tough rendering because there's pearls, mirrors, patterns, three different kinds of gold. But it's Emily and it's my favourite girl, daughter, well I can't say that because I have a second daughter, and my favourite genre of painting. It all came together in that and it took me a month and a half to paint," he says. Liz and Jim were there at O'Marra's studio on Sept. 28 and Liz thought it was wonderful. "We came here just to see Allan

this year as our son's up and we can't stay long. Allan did multiple shows at the hospital and they were wonderful. He really engaged with the patients and was one of the best volunteers ever," she says. Hankus, who in addition to displaying his photographic art on the tour, handled the social media for it, said he thought the second weekend was much better than the first. "Overall, I really enjoyed it and was glad I did it because of what I got out of it personally, such as printing, making photo albums, making bags, forcing myself to get organized etc. However, financially wise it was not worth it. I will definitely do the tour again but I may be taking a break next year as I've been part of it for three years. I am curious to try other markets in the area and even go down to GTA," he says. O'Marra told Bancroft This Week that as the new overall tour coordinator, he'll be consulting with the other coordinator about possibly doing a comprehensive formal request for feedback on how the tour went for the other tour participants. "By the numbers, visits to my venue were down in overall numbers; from 140 last year, my first on the tour, to 125 this year. And my painting sales dropped from seven last year to two this year. However, I did get two solid painting commissions arranged and have two more possibles. The enthusiasm for my artwork was as high, maybe higher this year, so that was a nice take away," he says. "So, overall, for me personally, the numbers were somewhat disappointing but I am looking forward to better results next year."