

Sharing local art during annual studio tour



By Kristena Schutt-Moore As the autumn leaves colour the roads and paint the scenery in shades of red, orange and gold it is easy to see how artists come to be inspired by the views. Many of these local artists opened their doors and studios to the community and all art lovers during the 30th Bancroft and Area Autumn Studio Tour during the weekends of Sept. 17 to Sept. 18 and Sept. 24 to Sept. 25 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. This year there were 17 artists who participated in the show and 10 locations to visit as some artists were guests at others' studios for the tour. At Location A was Amy Doole's studio. Doole makes functional stoneware pottery, she describes her work as nostalgic and playful with bright and earthy colours, sculptural elements, unique textures and vintage images, turning everyday usable items into works of art. Stephanie Park was a guest at Doole's studio. Park owns Spark Pottery and creates original wheel-thrown and hand built pottery using time-honoured techniques. She says her work is inspired by the natural world and the beauty of the wild landscapes of the region. At Location B, painter and printmaker Ketha Newman's studio gave tour goers a spectacular view from an off-grid hilltop studio. Newman's mixed media paintings, watercolours and Lino block prints are inspired by life in the backwoods and she infuses them with magical realism. Her guest on the tour was Teena Surma who uses paper-clay and fabric to create one-of-a-kind dolls. Surma takes her own imagination and brings to life dolls, animals and other creations. Each piece has its own unique personality and emotion. Patrick Doherty was at Location C. Doherty has been painting since 1990 and throughout his career he has experimented with various media and found satisfaction in combining unusual objects with traditional formats. Describing himself as an urban native, Doherty says he continues to evolve creatively but that he has strong roots in his childhood traditions. Quilter and mosaic artist Joanna Hankus was at Location D. She specializes in quilts and mosaics, working with different mixes of media. She loves to combine old and new materials together and assemble tesserae or fabrics together to create new and colourful compositions. At Location E there were two artists waiting to greet guests, wood artist Lyle Collins and Painter May vanRoan. Collins is becoming famous for his solid branch salt and pepper shakers, made from branches he sourced from his own property. He lets Mother Nature do the design work and he takes the found wood and produces unique ed tales, stands, charcuterie boards, burl lams, coat racks and more. vanRoan's passion lies in the colour, shape and contrast of a painting. She brings both an abstract and expressionist approach to painting her favourite subjects and is inspired by nature. She works with both acrylic and chalk pastels to bring both birds and flowers to life and create a play on words in the title of each of her paintings. Stone sculptor William Kafka and Painter Nancy McKinnon shared Kafka's studio at Location F on the tour. Kafka likes to work with the natural essence of his stone, using only hand tools to form a sculpture that is simple in form. A lot of his stone is from Zimbabwe and is unique in both colour and texture. Kafka creates his sculptures outdoors overlooking L'Amable Creek. McKinnon is a landscape painter who is inspired by the 'raw beauty' that surrounds North Hastings. Her technique is to incorporate bold brush strokes and vibrant colours with both acrylics and oils to show off the area's dynamic scenery and nature in her paintings. Husband and wife wood artist team Rene and Elain Butikofer were at Location G. At their studio they showed off how their teamwork creates unique wooden bowls. Using an antique wooden lathe and mostly burls found in the Bancroft area they showed guests who stopped by the steps it takes to create a functional piece of wood art. At Location H was glass artist Karen Istead. Her work consists of infused glass and stained glass to capture the light reflecting from water, sky and trees. She loves to work with

the glass to create images that shows the nature that surrounds her bunkie studio on Baptiste Lake. At Location I Painter and printmaker Freddie Towe, painter and sculptor Ken Fraser, painter Barbara Allport, and painter Carol Towe showed guests how different painting styles can really complement each other. Freddie Towe's innate sense of colour is used with what he calls 'a quirky interplay between humour and darkness.' While Fraser is a self taught painter who loves to create playful images as he tries to capture the wonder of the world around us by painting on old wood. He also creates sculptures from clay and found materials. Allport's work focuses more on natural landscapes and is inspired by the rural wedding of her home that is surrounded by forests, water and wetlands. Carol Towe is an oil painter that is inspired by landscapes and still life images. She says 'My goal is to try to find a sense of mystery in my subject, with the use of light and perspective.' The last location on the studio tour map was Location J where painter Ken Balmer opened up his gallery at High Falls. Through his work in wildlife paintings Balmer tries to capture both the likeness and essential spirit of each creature he paints. He works in both realistic, bold colour and abstract interpretations to achieve this mix. Although the Bancroft and Area Autumn Studio Tour is finished for this exhibition, there are plans already being made for next year's 31st show. Those interested in more information or artists interested in being part of the studio tour are encouraged to visit the website www.bancroftstudiotour.org.