

Vibrant, skilled student artwork fills Bancroft gallery for show



By Tony Pearson

Student works fill the Art Gallery of Bancroft, as budding artists from four different high schools show off their talent during the month of January. Participating schools were North Hastings, Centre Hastings, Madawaska Valley, and Haliburton Highlands. It is the gallery's 25th annual student exhibition, re-named after artist Michal Manson following her death in 2010. Manson, a former fine arts instructor at Wilfrid Laurier University, moved to Bancroft on her retirement and became greatly involved in promoting the goals of the Gallery. The naming honours her contributions over her life to the artistic development of young people. The show is sponsored by her friend local contractor and former council member Don Koppin, as his way of giving back to the community. Manson would surely have been proud of the accomplishments of the many talented youth now on display. Adjudicator Diane Woodward had much praise for the works, so much so that the first place winners are being invited to her house in Madoc for lunch and an afternoon at her gallery (?Art Below?) discussing art, its goals, visions, and techniques. Woodward has been painting for four decades, and has works hanging on numerous walls in Montreal and Ottawa. She has had two large shows at the Canadian Museum of Nature, and has also painted the exteriors of a Hindu temple in India, and the ?Crayon house? in Mexico, home of musician Stevie Ray Vaughan's widow. In addition, she has been featured on the TV shows Steven and Chris and Cottage Cheese.

First place for Painting went to Samantha Douglas for Mezmer-eyes.

?The large eyes of the woman grab you from across the room. Then her head scarf becomes a snake, and only then do we notice the head of the snake too close to us, with its more powerful eyes. This is enhanced by the maniacal detail of the snake's scales,? said Woodward.

Of mixed media winner Letting Go by Naomi Russell, another work dominated by eyes, Woodward said: ?Eyes and colour and weirdness draw you across the room, then reward you with well-painted and interesting detail.

?The burnt dandelions are original and very strange. There's lots going on, but the narrative does not overwhelm the work.?

The drawing winner was Ariel Weiss for Forty Things, done in Conté crayon and charcoal.

Woodward felt it expressed both longing and mystery; ?it is intelligent without being heavy-handed? This intriguing drawing speaks with subtlety.?

Second place finishers were Cassidy Croghan in painting, for Floral Hummingbird (reminding Woodward of '60s Beatles favourite Peter Max); Christina Stephen in drawing for The Hiker (?Has a sense of adventure?), and Matthew Manning in mixed media for The Fish (?Good colour, good variation and energy, bold graphic?).

Honourable mentions went to Brynn Meyers in drawing for her Self Portrait, Hannah Maynes in mixed media for The Horse, and Jade Shattraw in painting for Colourful Kitsch.

The show continues through Jan. 31.