

Early Bird Gets the Worm is Cultural Centre's last exhibition before return to Town Square



As garage and yard sale season continues through the summer, so too does an art exhibition inspired by all the weird, wacky and unusual things you might find on this seasonal treasure hunt.

The Aurora Cultural Centre's latest exhibition, *Early Bird Gets the Worm*, opened this spring in the Centre's temporary gallery space at Town Hall. Slated to be the final exhibition in the stop-gap space before the Centre returns to its traditional home in the Church Street School, now part of the Aurora Town Square redevelopment, in September, there are still plenty of opportunities to engage with the curated art, which covers everything from landscapes made out of leather, 'drag' ceramics, and even artistic interpretations of some of the less visible parts of the home.

'I am interested in residential architecture and I'm interested also in these hidden systems that exist within our homes that make the home possible,' says sculptor and multimedia artist Carrie Perreault, whose pieces inspired by parts of HVAC systems can be found throughout Town Hall's second floor. 'A house doesn't really work if it doesn't have heating and cooling, if it doesn't have plumbing - those invisible systems that make it possible. It's also how that translates into our relationships within our own family and all the invisible systems within our family and how, for better or worse, those systems are often very necessary for how our family structures work.'

Perreault often works in cement and plaster, but also drywall and asphalt.

She wants viewers to be just as curious as she is about materials and leave with their own idea of what her work is, or isn't - and with more than 225 individual pieces as part of the show, there's plenty of food for thought.

Orono-based Caledon native David Trotter also works in a medium that challenges the idea of what's possible.

His work with landscapes and other pastoral scenes - many of which were inspired by heritage images of Aurora's past in agriculture - are tooled out of leather which appears to be anything but cowhide.

Additional participating artists include Phuong Nguyen who explores the art style of Chinoiserie and how it relates to Asian identity and Joejene Santos who, in this case, has used the humble t-shirt as his canvas of choice.

'They wanted it palatable for European sensibilities,' says Nguyen of Asian-inspired porcelain and designs that come under the

Chinoiserie umbrella. That orientalism was interesting to me. I'm someone who was born and raised here; no matter how I see the world it is going to be from a very Eurocentric, western perspective. Understanding my own culture and the people that I come from, the country my family comes from through a western understanding of things is something I grappled with for a long time.

No demographic is a monolith. The East Asian diaspora, it came from a place of curiosity. We recognize this material as something that references us, our people and our artwork. What are you trying to say with it? Where's it coming from??

Ceramics have also inspired Jonah Strub.

Strub, whose drag alter ego is known as Loxanne Creamcheese, has always been attracted to what he describes as the aesthetics of kitsch and camp and how it relates to Queer identity and Jewish heritage.

You see it quite a bit in musical theatre, in comedy, and if you think about all of these extremely campy women there's like Ellen Greene in Little Shop of Horrors, Harvey Fierstein in Hairspray I have always been so fascinated and excited by the joy they bring and how I felt it represented me in a way, he says. I really brought my own persona of my drag alter ego to embody those aesthetics I have always been drawn to and I find my work it is really important to me in filling a gap I always felt existed in the art world where I never had art I necessarily connected with. Queer art is very political, very sexual. I wanted to create work that brought joy, was accessible, had a lot of fun, was really colourful. I wanted people with a worldview and upbringing similar to mine to feel a lot of joy when they see my work.

I really just want people to laugh. There are so many terrible things we can focus on. There are so many miserable, very heavy topics. I want to bring joy and happiness to people and I want to bring a lightness. I want to share my culture and my identity in a way that brings people in, makes people excited, and makes other gay and Jewish people feel represented and happy and excited. That's my goal.

For more on the ongoing exhibition, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/early-bird-gets-the-worm. The in-person exhibition runs through August 10, continuing online through August 30.

By Brock Weir