

Mystery Artists take up an unusual challenge in Cultural Centre fundraiser



By Brock Weir

Our mystery artist likes to work big but, as was the case with Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, it is the pictures that have become small.

Happiest working in what she describes as 'big, sweeping motions,' a recent challenge from the Aurora Cultural Centre forced our mystery artist to get back down to basics, working in a much smaller area.

The Cultural Centre has thrown down the gauntlet to over 40 artists from Aurora and surrounding York Region communities, to cast off the normal trappings of their work, and do things a little bit differently in 'Whose Art is it, Anyway? A Mystery Art Fundraiser' supporting the Centre.

These artists have been working independently on small pieces of art, generally measuring 6 inches by 8 inches, that will be up for sale for \$50 apiece beginning Thursday, December 11.

All participating artists are professional, earning a living through their art and, consequently, a name for themselves in the arts world. The twist, however, is the artist behind each piece will remain a mystery until the point of purchase.

'When you are asked to do something small and not to put your name on it, you start to think of things in a more fun and lighthearted manner,' says our Mystery Guest. 'I thought, what could I do that is different? Maybe I should do a little scene? Maybe I should do something [fitting] with the holidays? You don't think, 'What have I got that I can pull out that I haven't done before?' Rather, there was a lot of thought of trying something new and different just for fun.

'It is a very uplifting, challenging way of thinking about things.'

This is just what curators Clare Bolton and Stephanie Nicolo had in mind when coming up with the concept for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

'We wanted to make it fun for the artists and the public,' explains Ms. Bolton. 'It has been done before in other places, and we just thought it would be fun to give the artists a challenge to paint so small, and also for the public just to buy a piece of art because they love it. Even though most of these artists are established, professional, award-winning artists, [patrons] won't really know whose art it is until they buy it, so it is fun for both the artist and the audience.'

For our Mystery Guest, part of the fun was thinking up new ways to draw the eyes of local art lovers to their particular pieces. Although she is not quite finished her work, she anticipates having three pieces in the show depicting landscapes and seasons.

'I like people to feel happy or feel some sort of connection with a memory with what I do,' she explains. 'I don't do work that is filled with angst, despair and shock value. I know a lot of people do, and a lot of people want to send a deep message, but I am more lighthearted [in that work] reminds them of a holiday, their family, and they feel happy when they look at it. I am too old to find the angst and despair I am sending out through artwork. I want to find something more uplifting!

'[This mystery art project] will let people respond to the artwork and hopefully purchase it totally based on what it makes them think and feel, and when they look at it, they will say, 'I like it.' They won't be looking for a signature and questioning whether it will be worth something because so-and-so did it. It will be completely whether they liked it, felt happy, or found something to draw them in. You can't be biased about who did it!'

Whose Art Is It Anyway?, which will feature traditional watercolours, oils, acrylics, and even 3D art, brings together work from a number of York Region artists, including members of the Society of York Region Artists and the Pine Tree Potters Guild. The exhibition opens to the general public on December 12, running through December 20.

You can get a sneak peek (and make an early buy) with your ticket to Ensemble Polaris' upcoming concert, 'Definitely not the Nutcracker' on Thursday, December 11.

For more information on the concert and exhibition, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.