

Panel looks at how arts and artists have pivoted during COVID-19

Pivoting is something that has taken on a new meaning over the course of COVID-19.

Business owners, for instance, have been working tirelessly to pivot their operations to work in the new normal, hospitals and medical providers have had to pivot on how they deliver services, and artists too have had to pivot not only in how they deliver art to the masses but earn a living as well when concert venues are all but shuttered.

How artists have survived, thrived, and even flourished over the course of the pandemic is the topic of the second Arts Talk, which will be hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre this Tuesday, July 20.

Hosted by Jane Taylor, "From an Artists' Viewpoint: Art during ? and emerging from ? COVID?" will bring together jazz artist Barbra Lica, visual artist Salman Khattak, and classical pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin to share insights on how they maintained their creativity during the pandemic and what they see as the next steps to rebuilding their careers ? on the stage and in galleries.

"We have been so fundamentally aware since March 12, 2020, that on that day livelihood ended for those artists we serve in the community," says Ms. Taylor. "The interesting thing was to see the number of artists who just hopped onto digital platforms straight away to essentially give their art to the world, especially in a healing process."

Citing the images that are still seared into our minds of musicians coming out on their balconies to entertain people down below, or even local artists coming out onto their driveways to perform as frontline workers changed shifts, Ms. Taylor says "we could feel gathered at those moments, but we knew that none of those artists were being paid for what they did."

"All along we were so concerned that they weren't earning a livelihood at the same time," she says. "We also asked of people who are very adept in one area to add in this massive learning and acquire significant new skills to deliver their arts in a virtual space. While we at the Cultural Centre did what we could to support them, I am interested to hear what they had to do to adapt themselves or if they were able to adapt themselves in that way to sort of pivot onto the digital world. What projects emerged from that? From a historical standpoint, that is what I want to probe about. Those early learnings that happened over the last 16 months for them to be able to deliver their art to the world in the digital sphere.

"I want our audiences to understand the amount of work those artists did to present as they could in the digital sphere, if possible, over the last 16 months, but I also want them to understand how they shifted their work because we have heard time and again about the collaborations that have happened. That might have been with a digital team to help them put it together, it might have been with other artists to amplify their work in the digital sphere. It might have been how they create their work. They may have been creating a visual piece online. How they have learned to teach online because it is so different ? right from the nuts and bolts of the setup to how they engage with students. I really want our audience to understand all of that work that went behind and the learnings the artists had to deliver themselves in a digital world."

The Arts Talk will take place over zoom on July 20 at 7 p.m. To book your spot, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter