

## Youth artists prepare to showcase talent to community at MCOYR



Youth artists in local high schools are ready to lift the curtain on their talents this Saturday, February 11 with the opening of the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre.

But visitors to Town Hall's second floor gallery spaces can catch a sneak peek at the creativity that abounds in the community after Grade 12 students installed their works on Friday morning.

Supervised by Cultural Centre staff, watching the installation was Mayor Tom Mrakas and representatives from event sponsor Geranium Homes.

"I think it is important to always shine a light on arts and culture, especially in our community with the amount of youth we have that are so talented, year after year," said Mayor Mrakas. "To have the Town, the Mayor's Office, behind our youth in the community, showing off their incredible works, allows them to have an understanding that the Town is behind them, the Town is supporting them, and the Town thinks that arts are very important when it comes to community and building a community."

The Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts also has a special resonance for Geranium Homes, which is sponsoring the event for the sixth year running - including the 2021 and 2022 exhibitions that went virtual at the height of the global pandemic.

Stephanie Lane, Geranium's Director of Sales and Marketing, says she was a former art student herself and knows the value arts programs like these mean to communities in which they build, as well as the importance of students having the chance to show their works in a professional space.

"We want to support the communities and the youth aspect is something that's very important to us, fostering arts and culture," she said. "We think that is so important and often lacking in opportunity, sometimes. To be able to support the youth in Aurora here where we're building has just been an amazing opportunity for us to engage with the community."

The Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts will be available to the public this Saturday, but will formally open Wednesday, February 15, from 6 - 9 p.m. with a special reception at Town Hall.

The exhibition brings together work from Grade 12 students at all local high schools - and this year's show was for the first time opened to students who were home schooled, as well as Grade 12 students who created art outside of the formal academic environment.

"It's more inclusive," says Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre. "It has been very important with the teachers, the high schools, and they support the program thoroughly [but] we found there was always this difficulty of students who made art at different times or even students who are homeschooled. What's important is they have a focus on the art and that they have achieved a certain level of education and interest. It has allowed more people to be involved and we have art from outside of

just the structured class. We know that's important because people are joining us for that reason and I think it's a very important piece that we'll keep.?

Ahead of next week's reception, Haines says that the Centre is eager to welcome people back to see the show in person now that health-related circumstances allow, and that this will be beneficial for patron and artist alike.

?We know that visual art has that deep impact when people see it,? says Haines. ?It can be very visceral for people and we have been missing that. It's really fascinating to understand the narrative of Grade 12 students in Aurora. You're getting a picture of who they are, what they're feeling, what they're responding to and what they're experiencing in our world. Yes, you can see it digitally but when you can come in in person and see something that is 3-D, something you might notice? the more minute detail, you might have a different kind of response, and we know that art does that if you can see it in person. It means an enormous amount that we can have a public viewing of this.?

For more on the 2023 Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, visit [auroraculturalcentre.ca](http://auroraculturalcentre.ca).

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter