

Artists step outside for their craft

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Artists Jenn Wilkins, Kaz Jones and Dragica Vidakovic at town hall where some of their en plein-air paintings are hanging this month. Erika Engel/Collingwood Today

The paintings hanging on the walls of the town council chamber represent artists stepping outside the studio, their customary styles, and outside the picture. In fact, they were painted outside, en plein-air.

A group of six Tremont artists are currently featured in the 15 paintings hanging in the town hall's gallery. They are Lisa Hannaford, Kaz Jones, Kara McIntosh, Andrew Peycha, Dragica Vidakovic and Jenn Wilkins.

Wilkins chose two oil on canvas paintings called The Bay and Playful Falls for the town hall display.

"I love the water," said Wilkins. "I have a real connection with the water."

She said she loves the ever-changing colours of water, especially in Georgian Bay, and water's ability to convey such different states.

"When it's calm ... it soothes the soul. When it's rough, it's exciting," said Wilkins.

She typically paints abstract images, but paints more realistically for plein-air.

Her work is currently also on display at the Press Gallery at 65 Simcoe Street until the end of May.

For Vidakovic, painting is about people and what they do. While plein-air focuses more on the environment around the artist, for her it's still the people that make it special.

"I like going with my buddies," she said. "I never go out plein-air painting on my own."

She said she doesn't want to be left behind when she hears about a group going out to paint. Often the artists will sit close and chat as they paint. If they are more spread out, they will convene to talk about each other's work and their view of the surroundings.

"It's wild how different we each perceive the view," she said. "It comes back to people and how they choose to tell that story. That's really what art is about."

In the end, the artists will share a meal together, and each will bring something to contribute.

Vidakovic has two oil on wood paintings hanging at town hall named Chop Block and One Tree Turned.

She is currently in very early stages working on a project with the Collingwood Museum to commemorate the shipyards and the people who worked there.

For artist Kaz Jones, plein-air painting is about capturing the emotion of a place.

"A plein-air sketch has so much more in it than a photo," she said. "There's more feeling, and it's more of a personal interpretation."

Her paintings at town hall are acrylic, and are called Georgian Bay and Rainy Day on the Bay. They are both from one trip to Pointe au Baril, one is a sunny day and the other is mostly grey with dark clouds in the sky.

Jones said her paintings are more impressionistic than realistic.

"It's the impression of how you feel there," she said.

She has a show coming up at the Mad and Noisy gallery in Creemore featuring tractor paintings. She said they compare to some of her impressionist plein-air paintings in their similar lack of fine detail and their ability to convey a feeling.

She compared the strong, working tractors to the white pines on Georgian Bay.

"They have withstood years of wind and weather," she said.

The plein-air paintings will be hanging in the council chambers until May 25.