
Tay River Tattler

Arts News & Views from Tay River Gallery

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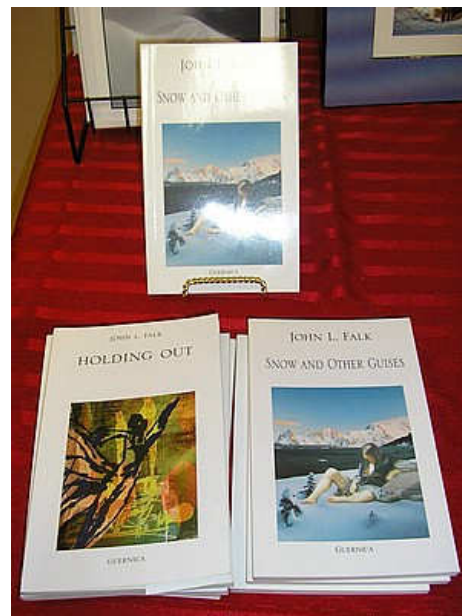
SNOW DEFINES

John Alexander Day painting Charlevoix

Snowscapes abound in the current group show of works by twelve Ontario artists. Featured in SNOW DEFINES are paintings by Deborah Czernecky, Karen Phillips Curran, John Alexander Day, Bill Keast, Sally Milne, Martha Markowsky, Tricia Wilmot Savoie Hanna Olszeweski and John Topelko and photography by Catherine Kelly, John Kessel and Gary Webster.

visual and emotive content with immediacy. This is poetry for poets most definitely and for poetry readers, la crème!

By gracious permission of Guernica Press publisher, and poet, John L. Falk, a small selection poetry from “Snow and other Guises” is displayed on walls as a complementary art offering for our last show of the year. Falk’s poems heighten the viewer experience with memorable images of snow as they serve the poet as a metaphorical signature in his poetry.



A master wordsmith, Falk with suitably sparse pen strokes imparts strongly

Three guest visual artists are featured in Snow Defines: Sally Milne, Martha Markowsky and Bill Keast.

Kingston area artist, Sally Milne exhibits two magnificent anthropomorphic icescapes, Ice Contours and Baleen. These works demonstrate her skilful handling of light in, on and through surfaces. Her rendering of the icebergs in Ice Contours takes on a hard, cubist style. Baleen is a large dramatic work with an ethereal quality. These works taken from Milne's series Water and Ice, were inspired by trips to Newfoundland coastline in 2000 and 2002.

Milne studied art in Geneva, Switzerland and has been painting for around 20 years. Watercolour is a medium well-suited to Milne's treatment of natural forms as fundamentally fluid and subject to change. Ice Contours & Baleen are exemplary works for this snow theme and provide dramatic visual impact and technical virtuosity.



A second guest artist in Snow Defines is well-known area artist, Martha Markowsky. A member of the Canadian Society of Artists, Martha has had more than 20 solo exhibitions and is represented by major galleries across Canada. Martha is probably best known for her impressionistic paintings of orchestral musical ensembles. In this show Martha Markowsky delights the viewer with her vibrant, brightly coloured nostalgic urban vignettes of children playing. Markowsky's handling of light, colour and composition is masterful, with an exquisite rendering particularly in the haunting rural landscape called Charlevoix. For Snow Defines, six oil paintings by Martha Markowsky are featured. These charming narratives strike a nostalgic chord in viewers and are uplifting scenes that we can all relate to in memories of winters past.



A third guest artist, from the Belleville area, Bill Keast, exhibits two endearing rural winter scenes; "Humble Abode" and "Hilltop Haven". Prominent in his paintings is the use of cloisonné and in his paintings of the rural Ontario landscape, the images of countryside are bold and idealized. His gentle distortions, the two-dimensional nature of the work and the strong colours combine to create images designed to

please and are distinctly Keast's own. The compositions are a careful rendering with technical prowess for imposing effect.



John Alexander Day's new winter landscapes are infused with intense colour and dynamic light. Compositional elements of trees, rock jutts, ships, and water provide the dramatic break in the backdrop of white. The setting is breathtaking with four scenes from Charlevoix. These poignant renderings by Day revive one's sense of the incomparable beauty of the Canadian landscape in winter. Historical buildings are the subject matter of two other winter scenes in the Manotick and Carleton Place locale.

As an aside, for those like myself, who confess to a serious love/hate relationship with winter, the paintings in this show will arouse the fonder sentiments and put the terror/dread at bay. Winter is portrayed for the most part as tame, playful and suitably adorable.

Karen Phillips Curran's watercolour, "Snow Fence", with muted palette, provides a view of an anemic winter landscape with diffused light and focal point the line of slender fence posts that stretch into the horizon giving the

painting an ethereal quality. Sky of pastel blue grey with tinge of rose with lightly defined hills in the horizon allude to the soft haze of early day. The compositional strength of this piece is created with light handling. Not a superfluous stroke to be found in this zen-like study in quietude.

The photography of Kessel, Kelly and Webster captures the beauty as well as other less endearing qualities of winter snow. Catherine Kelly's deer in winter gives a sense of the fierce cold, animal life is pitted against. The night scene in the park in Ottawa and Mooney's Bay scene give a sense of the desolation and abandonment that is part of the winter experience as the general population retreats to the warmth of their homes.



Gary Webster's old abandoned truck buried in snow also gives one the sense of abandonment that occurs, while snowbanks create striking visual patterning from nature's excesses. John Kessel's blue fence is a picturesque image focusing on the beauty of light and land in the depth of winter.



Tricia Savoie's group of winter landscapes on exhibit are for the most part romantic renderings of rural settings, pleasing in soft pastels, with a few with bolder palettes, of more remote locales. The scenes are inviting and enchanting "winter wonderland" scenes drawing the viewer's involvement with their immediacy.

With "Through the Birches", Leslie Rohonczy paints a dreamlike white birch forest with dynamic lighting that is reminiscent of striking scenes we may encounter rarely whereas her second work, an acrylic, Old Barn in Winter, depicts a common, everyday farm scene.

From Hannah Olszewski, two renditions of fantasy snowscapes, one with stylized forest of trees and the other an abstracted landscape with ice fragments of colour.

Deborah Czernecky's forests and landscapes in her snowscapes have an anthropomorphic quality to them and are vivid dramatizations of scenes the artist has painted in open air. Her two works compel attention, have staying power and elicit a pleasing response in viewers.



Gudrun Shutz, currently living in the Arnprior area is another newcomer to the gallery. Gudrun exhibits two snowscapes with varying tonal qualities. The one with dominating sunset and the other a subdued idyllic snow scene. Gudrun takes great pains to create realistic interpretative works and has a knack for choosing compositional material which strikes a chord with viewers.



John Topelko provides two mid-size winter landscapes painted from nearby locales, "Sunlit Hillside" and "Ottawa River Spring Breakup", the latter a still soothing scene in monotonous blues. This painting is a departure from John's normally bold palette.

Shirley Mancino provides a few delicate snowscapes as late additions to the show, in pen and watercolour, in a rather subdued palette for Mancino, but with a compositional interpretation leaning towards abstraction with the artist's imaginative flourishes.

This show comes together as a dramatic, portrayal of the "beauty of snow", a true celebration of snow. No curating parameters were imposed on the interpretation. The participating artists have chosen to focus on the aesthetic with their imagery creating their own mythic landscape and conveying their own passionate connection with this Canadian element.

OPEN HOUSE NOV. 25TH.

The Open House at Tay River Gallery on November 25th coincided with the opening day of the town's celebration of "an Olde Fashioned Christmas", the Festival of Good Cheer. Indoors visitors enjoyed hot apple cider and home baked cookies. A draw was held for a limited edition graphite wildlife print by Stuart Arnett and the winner was Perth resident, Mary Jane Lee.



Downtown Perth with its picturesque quaint shops was a wonderland of twinkling lights and holiday cheer. With balmy record high temperatures outdoors, a true white "winter wonderland" experience was only evident indoors at "Snow Defines" where visitors were deluged with a panorama of snow images.

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The grande finale of the day took place in the Tay Basin in downtown Perth with dramatic fireworks and the lighting of the Christmas trees in the Crystal Palace. By evening temperatures had fallen, and onlookers were warmed by the open fire. The large group of spectators gazing skyward in unison, families, babies in strollers, seniors on park benches - a delightful cohesive moment in time. Do join us next year for some plain old fun in Perth the olde fashioned way at the Festival of Good Cheer!

Along with the "Snow offerings" of the current group show, Tay River Gallery is pleased to present a selection of works by James E. Pay, Allison Robichaud, Ann Gruchy, Catherine Gutsche, Antal Serences and other gallery artists. The Gallery will be closed December 24, 25, and 26th and will reopen on Dec. 27th.

Have a wonderful holiday!

Lisa Brown