

Studio by Design brings Scotiabank CONTACT Festival to the Alton Mill

By Constance Scrafield

The Call to Submit fine art pieces for the Scotiabank CONTACT Festival, one and the same time at two Satellite Galleries, in the Falls Gallery in the Alton Mill Arts Centre in Alton and Lower Sisnett Lobby of the Helson Gallery, Georgetown, is closing on March 27. The Scotiabank CONTACT Festival is the largest photography festival in the world.

Said E. Connie Munson, co-founder with artist Kayla Jackson of Studio by Design, hosting the two Satellite Galleries, "Last year, we did a Satellite Gallery in the Parish Hall in Norval, titled Places and Spaces - Figuratively Speaking, with photographs and other fine art pieces but based on the human form. Over 140 pieces came into the show last year and I'm excited to see what happens this year. It runs from May 2 through May 28 at both the Falls Gallery in the Alton Mill and Lower Sisnett at the Helson Gallery in Georgetown."

The plan is for this to be a Passport Tour of the two Satellites, Alton Mill's Falls Gallery and Helson Gallery Lower Sisnett in Georgetown.

This year, with the same theme, she is looking to turn the focus on "the human form and spaces we inhabit. People are profoundly different but still the same."

While keeping control on the overall, Ms. Munson plans well ahead, admitting that monkey wrenches come as the unexpected.

In her first year of holding art shows locally, she engaged the White Church in Caledon, where during the course of the few weeks the show ran, she slipped down some stairs and broke her hip but informed us that "having a positive focus is really a help. This year, Kayla was incredible."

Recovering from her fall and subsequent surgeries in a seniors' residence, converted from a hotel in Brampton, Connie Munson was nevertheless very busy with preparations last year for Norval, and this year at Falls Gallery and Sisnett.

"Out of the 10 press releases I wrote," she told us, "I wrote eight of them from four different wards."

Ms. Munson has wisely joined and is a member of several art clubs and thus, knows or knows of many artists.

"They love to have a voice and ideas that can be nurtured," she commented.

"We found that people wanted to help set and be involved with whatever needed to be done," she said. "while I was in the retirement residence, healing from my crushed hip and doing physio, the projects kept me busy and sane with the CONTACT project."

As she was putting this year's CONTACT shows together, "Then I thought about the terrible things that are happening. So, this year's Spaces and Places "Figuratively Speaking" looks at our similarities. Growing up on a dairy farm, I found that was the practice of people."

On her family's dairy farm, they ended up in having people from around the globe. She soon learned that what they had in common was not what divided them.

"In my own mind, when I think of teaching and as a social worker [two of her separate careers], what is it that unites us? Everybody deals with life on a day to day basis. We get up and have breakfast of whatever it is we like and then live our days. In terms of many other shows that have gone before us, there are so many things about what we share."

Fourteen people have submitted their work early, new and established artists. Two are well acclaimed, Judy Daley, artist and Curator of the Helson Gallery since 2013. She has been Assistant Curator and then, Curator for Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives for 25 years. She is now embarked on her own arts practice.

Fausta Facciponte, visual artist and professor of Photography at the University of Toronto Mississauga and Sheridan College, she has received accolades from prestigious publications and institutions, along with Federal and Provincial Arts grants. Her photography is shown at the McMaster Museum of Art and others. Ms. Facciponte will oversee the adjudication and decide which pieces go where at the two Satellites, as a Passport Tour to encourage people going from one location to the next.

The two galleries are only about a 35 minute drive apart, making visits to both a pleasant day's outing in the lovely month of May.

Our guest participant is Robert Steven, Executive Director of the Portrait Gallery of Canada. which is a virtual gallery, Connie Munson informed us.

She said, People want to see two presentations, sitting down with different artists to talk about their visions, art in general life.

This is just a fluke, something I thought of how we are similar., she outlined. In my classroom, this was a place to be safe; 27 years of ways to make that work with kids of different ages. There was so much success with kids from different ethnicities.?

Offering her reasoning, It's almost an osmosis process, things we affected are the strongest. The affective level is a really strong conduit for learning. It's such a strong applicator, a new opportunity.?

She has survived the monkey wrenches of her recent life: I'm busy, making things happen. The White Church and then the Parish Hall in Norval. We had things all set up with 127 pieces. People weren't even talking, just noticing what other people were doing; people putting their energy in together.?

They asked her what she was planning for the next year but Ms.Munson maintained, It's not me that becomes the focus; it's the other that matters.?

She thinks that it is an incredible what a feeling people have for the right to live; growing up with people from all over the world, her mother would try to cook food other nationals ate.

I was blown away by the work that we got from people last year, she remarked. This theme itself attracts people to travel and if it is to see and experience it, well, that is enlarging.?

For all the information to submit and, on May 6, to attend the Opening Reception the Falls Gallery, in the Alton Mill Arts Centre, from 1:00 to 4:30 pm. Go to www.studiobydesign.ca