



Margaret McSweeney, left, with her painting Spring Greens, Eileen Sawracki, with Autumn Song, and Joyce Upex, with Bear Valley, Lumby, are some of the active members of the North Okanagan chapter Federation of Canadian Artists showing their works in the juried group exhibition, Diversity, at the Vernon Public Art Gallery.

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by Kristin Froneman - Vernon Morning Star

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A grizzly munches on fresh, hewn grass while the leaves of autumn stand out in their colourful foliage.

A face, abstracted in red and blue brush strokes, peers out while a turtle, swimming in a pastel sea, surfaces to take a look at the world around it.

This is just a taste of what some active members of the North Okanagan chapter of the Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) have created for the juried group exhibition, *Diversity*, opening in the Vernon Public Art Gallery's (VPAG) Community Gallery Thursday.

This is the chapter's first show at the VPAG in more than a decade, so the artists have gone all out to capture the diverse theme, said chapter president Martha Moore.

"Everything is represented. We have pastel, oil, watercolour, acrylic, mixed media. Subjects and genres range from representational and abstract to figurative, landscape, portraiture and still life," said Moore, who joins her fellow artists in the exhibition. "This is a juried show, so we will be giving out cash and ribbon prizes, which is a first for our group."

This rounds out a busy year for the North Okanagan FCA chapter, which has had three exhibitions, two in Vernon and one in Armstrong, in 2016 alone.

"All together our members have submitted 187 paintings this year," said Moore. "The majority of us are self-taught, but many of us take workshops and all of us are prolific artists. The only way to improve is to put rubber to the road and paint... You have to grow as an artist. If not, you are not going to go very far."

Founded in 1941 by Canadian artists, including Group of Seven luminaries Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer and A.Y. Jackson, the FCA has been a key figure in shaping the landscape of Canadian visual arts and culture for the past 75 years.

Operating what is believed to be the first completely artist-sponsored gallery-studio in Canada, the FCA was established to promote and support practising artists in their professional development and to stimulate public interest in the growth of visual fine arts.

Today, the FCA is Canada's largest association of visual artists with more than 2,350 members, representing a broad variety of genres.

The North Okanagan chapter, based in Vernon, currently has 72 members who come from as far north as the Shuswap, east to Cherryville and south to Lake Country.

The chapter meets monthly to discuss various topics and usually includes a program or education component such as demonstrations, critiques and progressive painting sessions, said Moore.

"Those interested in showing their works in exhibitions need to become an active member of the FCA," she said. "They are juried in by meeting with a senior artist (associate member) of the organization, but you can still just attend meetings."

In the North Okanagan, FCA juried exhibitions have been held at numerous public and private galleries, including Ashpa Naira on Vernon's westside, the Salmon Arm Arts Centre, the Coatcheck Gallery in the Vernon Performing Arts Centre and the Armstrong-Spallumcheen Art Gallery.

Also opening at the VPAG is the solo exhibition, *Coevolution*, produced by Edmonton-based artist Lyndal Osborne.

It consists of two sculptural installations, which brings into focus the current discourse surrounding the consequences of unrestrained genetic engineering.

"The objective of this exhibition is to address the issues of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and their impact on traditional food growers," said VPAG executive director Dauna Kennedy Grant. "This is a topic very relevant to the Okanagan Valley, with its vast orchards and agriculture and we look forward to creating the opportunity for dialogue on this important topic."

Both exhibitions open Thursday, Oct. 13, with a reception from 6 to 8 p.m.

They continue to Dec. 21.

An artist talk(s) with four members from the North Okanagan FCA chapter will take place Oct. 22 from 1 to 2 p.m.

“We will do a show-and-tell with a slide show, so bring your questions,” said Moore.