



"Buffalo" by Jorma Nieminen, oil on canvas. (Courtesy of Gamal Rahman)

ART MARKETPLACE

Diverse Artists Display Works at Famed Ottawa Hair Studio

BY SUSAN HALLETT

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OTTAWA—A short walk from Parliament Hill stands a modest cultural icon. The Connoisseur Hair Salon has been trimming the locks of actors, ambassadors and politicians for decades and at one time cut the hair of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau.

Gamal Rahman, an artist, architect, teacher, painter and photographer hailing from Egypt, has owned the Salon for the past 15 years. In that time his love of art has transformed the small studio into an artistic haven.

“It’s good for everyone—artists, clients and even art galleries. Bringing this art to the people, and stretching our boundaries is worth it,” said Rahman. “People come for their hair, now they can stay for the art.”

For two weekends in June he will open the doors of the studio to a diverse group of six locally based painters and photographers representative of Canada’s multicultural population.

The Artists

In the drawings and paintings of Finnish artist Jorma Nieminen the past jostles with the present, accentuating the originality of his vision in his philosophical works. The question of human survival is often posed, with birds acting as intermediaries between the artist and the viewer.

Rita Kapadia, originally from India, is “fascinated by the play of light and mood.” She definitely captures this in her work. Rita went to the London School of Economics and worked as an economist before marrying. Then, while living in the Philippines, she started to paint the traditional way, with oil on canvas until a German artist introduced her to a different technique—painting with the fingers. Her unique canvases show how paint, a piece of cloth, and fingers can create a beautiful works of art.

The compelling paintings of Sudanese artist Hamid Ayoub, who teaches at the Ottawa School of Art and the Nepean Creative Art Centre, brings feelings to the forefront. Hamid strives to depict humanity and the beauty of the human spirit through colour and movement. A graduate of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, Sudan, University of Science and Technology, with a specialty in textile design, his goal is to contribute “to the global arts community immaterial of political, racial, religious or gender considerations.”

ElBagir Osman is a visual and media artist, educated and born in Sudan. He studied painting at the College of Fine Art in Khartoum, earning a graduate degree at the Academy of Arts, Cairo. His works not only have a strong textural quality, but they appear as mere fragments of a much greater lyrical vision. His works are in many collections around the world.

Suzanne B. Hale, from Ottawa, has studied physical theatre, mime, mask, puppetry, and most recently, fine arts at Dawson City, Yukon, as part of the BFA program at the Klondike Institute of Arts, School of Visual Art. Hale uses her body to “find an image and shape it.” Her Flamenco Tulips are part of a series “that happened as a kind of physical play” as she was shooting blind, “as if in a dance.” She is showing her work for the first time, and viewers should note her series of Ottawa night scenes of what she calls “stretched light” because of their beauty and originality.

Eric Danis, from the hills of Cantley, Quebec, is also showing his paintings for the first time. Eric, a musician and amateur archaeologist, loves the outdoors. His oils on canvas capture wondrous visions of nature and hint at a spirituality that leads quite naturally toward a certain romanticism stemming from dreams and myths of the aboriginals who were first on the land where he lives.

Pop't Art for The Connoisseur opens on Saturday June 21st from 7-10 p.m. and runs for two weekends at the Connoisseur Hair Salon, 202 Cooper St., Ottawa. For more information contact Susan Hallett: 613-233-2085. (Full disclosure: Susan Hallett is curator of the exhibition).

Susan Hallett is an award-winning writer and editor who has written for The Beaver, The Globe & Mail, Wine Tidings and Doctor's Review, among others.

Email: hallett_susan@hotmail.com