

Heather and Melissa en plein air

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

As artist and art teacher, Melissa Mary Jenkins said, 'Whenever I hear a person say, 'I wish I was an artist,' I tell them, 'It's so easy - just relax and draw what you see - it's not a matter of comparison, it's about expressing yourself and having a good time.'

In other words, whatever you think your level of skill is, either as an artist or a hiker, come and join Melissa Jenkins and Heather Kendall for their 'Get creative- get outside - en -plein- air- sketching -and- hike' set for this upcoming Sunday, September 23, beginning at 9:00 am.

It is Heather Kendall's pleasure to guide the hike, which is not challenging but suited to all comers; Ms Jenkins will be your guide to the sketching: her main motives being that you discover your natural abilities; learn how much fun and rewarding sketching and painting can be.

To facilitate your participation in the art work, you will be provided with an 'art wrap,' an invention of Ms Jenkins' mother-in-law, who has created the neat arrangement of a length of fabric, with compartments sewn onto it, in which can be stored what is needed by way of pencils, brushes, tools and paints. All this is then rolled and tied; a sketch book, clipboard, something to sit on, are included, as well, in the whole take-home kit.

Plus a gourmet breakfast prepared by Emily Quinton and Stephen Aspinall, (Goose and Gander) of yogurt, fruit, homemade granola, maple drizzle; ham and cheese croissant for a snack later.

'Coffee and tea served trailside from good, old fashion thermoses!'

Heather Kendall is about about the hike in her life. This summer, she went on a 23 day hike through the Sierra Nevada, starting at Yosemite Park, which was closed to visitors due to fires. The trail was remarkable and Ms Kendall was also remarkable, carrying, as she told us, 'a 65 litre pack, weighing 35 pounds,' on a trail that 'was 23 days, hiking 370 kilometres of vertical changes.'

As it was a telephone interview, we frankly asked her if she is huge, to which she laughed and said, 'Oh, no, I'm only five foot, two, but I'm very fit.'

For sure.

Walking on a part of the John Deere trail, Ms Kendall outlined some of the path they took: 'You hike north from south at Yosemite. We saw Lake Tahoe, the largest alpine lake in North America and climbed Mount Whitney, the tallest peak at more than 14,000 feet [in contiguous United States -Wikiwand].'

She took ownership: 'I will be doing the hike portion, on Sunday, offering to help people learn more about it or share their own experiences.'

This combined adventure cum art class emerged from a conversation the ladies had one day when they were talking and saying how they are both out door enthusiasts, especially enjoying the Credit River area of Terra Cotta.

Ms Jenkins expressed, 'I would love to teach somebody how to sketch here.'

Art plus hiking: exactly how so many fine landscape paintings have been produced by some of Canada's most famous artists.

Now you do not necessarily have to be well experienced in either to enjoy both.

Former high school teacher, Melissa Mary Jenkins loves to spend her summer, as she did this year, with her two daughters - her husband coming up for the weekends - at their cottage near Bancroft, north of Peterborough.

Her ten year old twin daughters, Sofie and Maya, 'are both very artistic. One sketches with charcoal, especially trees and I paint over them. This is what we're doing right now. Every day, we just wake up and decide what we're going to do. We love to include other children. One time [this summer] our little neighbour came with us. We were in the boat and we just pulled off to climb a hill and then wound up having to swim back to our boat. We left our phones at home and I longed to take pictures but I was so in the moment with my children...'

Back here in Caledon, they still live on a rural property where they can go for walks outdoors whenever they like.

While Sofie is concentrating on sketching and Maya is 'more concrete and sketches buildings and trees,' Ms Jenkins herself has started working in abstract.

Said she, 'What I do is I take the parts of nature and I put those parts into abstract, transforming them into my own interpretation.'

Whatever feels right in art, usually is. Come, see for yourself.

'Get Creative & Get Outside - En Plein Air Sketching and Hike' is this Sunday, September 23, starting at 9:00 am. The meeting point is at the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, 17760 McLaren Road, Caledon.

For more details about it all and to register for the adventure, go to Heather Kendall's business website:

www.joyscoutlearnshops.com