

Local resident Freda Wrench discusses her life in art and fashion

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Freda Wrench paints strange and very moving pictures.

'My paintings evolve; I use acrylic or watercolour. The mediums flow and they show me where to go. I can see within the painting. I can see hope or despair. Sometimes, the figure tells me whether it's hope or despair,' so Ms. Wrench told the Citizen in a recent telephone interview.

'Because I like to paint figurative, I do life drawing in Shelburne with a lady coach, north of 89, Jen Main. She teaches art at her home. I've always enjoyed drawing the human figure. I'm incorporating this in pictures about the environment. They're about mankind's relationship with the environment and to the climate crisis.'

She said, 'People and the environment is my focus but I have to paint lighter too, find relief through another subject matter; focus on something within the landscape.'

Ms. Wrench explained that she doesn't do landscapes, as such, but fragments out of them, which sometimes include a figure.

'I am a painter. I do try to experiment with sculpture.

'For nine years, I was on the committee for the Headwaters gallery. I worked with other artists. It was a great experience and I may join [Headwaters Arts] again some time. I showed my work there. I'm not a member right now.

'I never did formal studies at a college,' she related, 'but many workshops, classes, night classes. Whatever I could do. I graduated from George Brown as a fashion designer; then moved to Peterborough with my husband. Gradually, I pursued fine art.

'I worked in Peterborough as a fashion display. That was a long time ago.'

Referring to her live figure drawings and deciding whether or not to include them in a show of her work, Freda Wrench commented, 'There's a reluctance to show those drawings. It's not something that is normally done with the conservatism in the rural area, not as a matter of policy.'

The couple had two children. In Peterborough, Ms. Wrench was, 'finally a stay-at-home mom. I started to paint more as they got older.

'My husband has been in finance most of his life but he's retired now. We do occasionally travel. We've a trip planned to Australia. It is going to be in November.'

Back to her art, she told us, 'I am not a landscape painter. I painted water, the shape of a tree trunk, not panoramic. I've tried to focus more in on a subject.'

Art is a life of learning, as she observed, 'I am always trying to improve. There's always another plateau to reach. The main thing is I somehow want to find a way to make a difference with my work in regards to climate change; it means that I will have to find another way to sell my work. It's not about selling; it's about making people work harder. To show what mankind has done to the environment and some [paintings] show that there is hope, if we change the way we do things.'

She recalled, 'I actually had a show once in Wellington gallery and a woman came out to me crying. I want it to be about hope. That we can change for the better. What we need to do are all the little things we can but we have to get the government to change things.

All the plastic they're producing, manufacturers have to make a change so we can make changes because the public can get confused.?

Continuing her line of thought, she remarked, 'By showing what we've done wrong and what we can do better, it's hard to show. Sometimes, they're almost like semi abstract, which makes it harder for people to see what I'm trying to tell them.

'In 2011, I had a show and then I had another show. If I'm going to have another show, I'll have to be ready with more work. I'm not a speaker but my art is my way of trying to make a change. I have to do a little more of some new work on these theories and find a place to place a show.?

She did 'two shows at Glen Williams, which is closed now.?

Like so many people, Ms. Wrench would rather be 'optimistic. There's people trying to find ways to clean up the plastic in the ocean and they're going to ban plastic bags.?

Still and all, she admitted, 'I worry about it for my grandchildren. I will do as much as I can within my talents. They did sell at the first show. I understand that people want something to hang in their living room. Some of my paintings are more out of the box than others. There was one that I did called 'Hope'. It looked like figures coming out of the rumble with the light shining behind. That one sold.?

With the Arts and Culture weekend coming at the end of September, she told us, 'I want to add a few more to what I'm doing. I used to paint full time but now, not every day with the grandchildren but my art is still so important. I just took up the cello last fall and I sing with a choir.

'There's a library in Bolton ' I might have a painting there and also something with the Orangeville Arts Group [of which she is a member] on the Arts and Culture weekend.?