

'The Next 50 Years' draws attention to diminishing Ontario landscapes

By Riley Murphy

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The newest solo show at Headwaters Arts Gallery focuses on the fragile beauty of the Southern Ontario landscape and what we stand to lose.

Headwaters Arts member and Toronto-based landscape artist Piera Pugliese shared that David Attenborough's words inspire the show: 'The next 50 years will determine the fate of all life on this planet.'

The show, titled 'The Next 50 Years,' includes 25 oil paintings.

Onlookers can enjoy scenes of forests, rivers, and skies that are not only picturesque but also essential to our identity as Canadians, says Pugliese.

'The land is changing,' says Pugliese. 'We're seeing it burn, flood, and dry up. Through these paintings, I want to celebrate what we still have and remind us how urgent it is to protect it.'

Her style of painting began when Pugliese, in her graduating year at OCAD, took a landscape painting trip in the Algoma Highlands.

'I was hooked,' she said.

Since then, she shared that landscape painting has always been her touchstone.

It was in the Algoma Highlands that she fell in love with plein air painting.

Plein air painting is the practice of creating a painting outdoors directly with the subject rather than in a studio.

Pugliese works en plein air throughout Ontario in the summer, and develops her pieces

into large-scale studio paintings in the winter.

Pugliese said she will often go back to paint a landscape again and again, which onlookers can see through her paintings from the marsh along the Millennium Trail in Prince Edward County.

'We have a beautiful home in nature. We have to protect it. It's part of our Canadian identity,' urged Pugliese. 'With the floods and the fires and the droughts, things are changing. I don't know what we can do to change things, maybe just be aware of it.'

Pugliese shared that she often paints alongside the Humber River, and during her time spent there, she has noticed a change in the landscape.

Not only can onlookers note the changes in the landscape in the show, but they can also see the changes and progress in Pugliese's work.

She included pieces that illustrate the lead-up to the large studio paintings, including her plein air pieces and colour studies.

Her solo show will run from July 2 to August 4 at the Headwaters Arts Gallery in the Alton Mill Arts Centre.

Pugliese will be in the Gallery on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. ? 5 p.m.