

Haggo: Down to earth artists explore ecology theme

Ten artists plus one location make On the Rock: Merging Art and Ecology, an exhibition at the Carnegie Gallery.

The paintings, prints, photographs, textiles, pottery and sculpture were inspired by Cedar Haven Farm, near Freelton. The exhibition is sponsored by A Rocha, an international Christian environmental organization.

"Our motivation for these activities comes from our belief in a creator God who has called us to be stewards of His creation," says Patrick Lilley, A Rocha's science adviser.

The Hamilton chapter of A Rocha (The Rock in Portuguese) invited local artists to visit Cedar Haven Farm. Aleda O'Connor was one of them.

"Artists are often asked to contribute to worthy causes, but this project engaged us through our work and vision," she told me. "We participated in the year-long observations about the property along with the scientists and volunteers who were examining soil, measuring contaminants and the prevalence of native and invasive species, birds and animals, while working to rectify damage. Along with the scientific data that was collected, our work is a report about the farm and its well-being."

In Path and Apple Tree, O'Connor, working with oil pastels, focuses on a tree with red apples in a sunny, soft-edged landscape.

"I was simply attracted to the majesty of that grand and mature tree that was heavily laden with fruit early one September morning," she says.

"My landscape work is a visual record of environmental conditions. I am particularly interested in weather, and look for images that express the relationship between living organisms and the atmosphere."



Janusz Wrobel, *Edge of Winter Woods*, photograph.



Aleda O'Connor, *Path and Apple Tree*, oil pastel.

A fruit tree is also the apple of Lorraine Roy's eye. In *Wild Apple*, she offers us a nearly bare tree growing precariously among rocks. The paleness of the trunk and branches are dramatically set against a darkened wintery sky.

Roy layers and overlaps pieces of fabric, machine-sewing them into place, but leaving rough edges visible.

There are no rough edges in Barry Coombs's *Yellow Llama*, a watercolour.

An elegant llama stands in front of topsy-turvy blue and grey buildings. Coombs reduces most of his forms to straight lines and sharp angles, creating geometric shapes that convey dynamic movement.

"When I first visited Cedar Haven Farm, I was drawn to the animals right away," Coombs says. "The architecture inspired me, as well. I did ask myself about stewardship and ecology and felt that my subject was relevant, given the constant balancing act between nature, agriculture and animal husbandry."

Janusz Wrobel, a photographer, captures the intricate patterns created by snow, ice and sunlight in *Edge of Winter Woods*, a composition of two loose horizontals united by the vertical trunks of trees.

The edge of the woods "symbolizes the boundary of tame and untamed worlds," Wrobel explains. "As Cedar Haven Farm's destiny is to return to a natural state, the multi-generational efforts of farmers to maintain these boundaries comes to an end."

The exhibition also features work by Kristen Brittain, Floyd Elzinga, Ralph Heather, Guennadi Kalinine, Kim Rempel and Diana Scholtens.

Regina Hago will give an illustrated talk at the Art Gallery of Hamilton on Thursday, March 27, about *Challenging Stereotypes*, a look at how Canadian women artists took to modernism in the early 20th century. The talk, which begins at 7 p.m., will focus on artists in the AGH collection. To register, phone 905-527-6610, ext. 241, or go to registration@artgalleryofhamilton.com

dhago@thespec.com

On the Rock: Merging Art and Ecology

Where: Carnegie Gallery, 10 King St. W., Dundas

When: Until March 30

Phone: 905-627-4265

Admission: Free



Barry Coombs, Yellow Llama, watercolour. Part of On the Rock, a group exhibition at the Carnegie Gallery.