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Former Devonian artist making it big in NYC, friends holding fundraiser

By Mark Wierzbicki
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It's a long way from Devon to the bright lights of New York City, but Darlene Adams will be making that journey next fall, and it's one she's been working towards for years.

The former Devon resident and professional artist has been chosen to display her work at the prestigious Agora Gallery in New York City, the centre of the North American art world.

The influential gallery will also be representing and promoting Adams and her work — a rare honour, and a once in a lifetime opportunity for any artist.

"It's all been so surreal. I know this is real, but some days I just can't believe it," said Adams of her life since she was first contacted by the Manhattan gallery.

"(Agora) have a list of 15,000 art collectors who check out the displays regularly, so for them to want to represent my work, well, I was just so excited. It's a chance to not just promote my work but also sell some pieces."

Adams, who only began painting seriously in 2001, lived in Devon from 1975 until 1996, raising a family and setting deep roots. She maintains connections with many residents, and though her artistic career would not begin in earnest until she moved to Edmonton, she recalls being creatively involved in the life of the town.

"I used to paint windows during Devon Days," she recalls.

"And I volunteered often at Robina Baker, and Riverview and the high school, and sometimes I would do art with the kids."

Her work has progressed since then.

Adams describes her paintings, which can be viewed at artwerksbydarlene.com, as "bold, impressionistic, abstract landscapes."

Working mainly in oils, Adams paints scenes remembered from her many travels.

"I love movement. Sky, the definition of trees and hills, colours — the way the sun can hit a field and on a hilltop the grass is lime green, but in a valley it's emerald — these things inspire me."



Expanse, one of several pieces by Darlene Adams that will be on exhibit at the Agora Gallery in New York City, shows her impressionistic style, and skillful use of colour. Many of Adams' Devonian friends are holding a fundraiser to help her handle the high costs of moving herself and her work to New York during the exhibit, which will begin in October.

Adams first came to the Agora's attention after a showing of her work at an exhibit in San Francisco. Word of her talent made its way to the Agora's director, who then made the call that could change Adam's life.

However, before she can make it to Manhattan, Adams needs a little help from her friends.

Agora representation doesn't come for free, and shipping precious cargo like original artworks isn't cheap either, not to mention her own transportation and boarding costs.

To help her take the next step in her career, several of Adam's friends are organizing a fundraiser. Devon residents Kim Petrie, Melanie Samuelson and Ron and Lynn Pettigrew are organizing the dinner and silent auction, taking place at the Old Timer's Cabin in Edmonton on March 20.

The night will feature live music, bar, dinner and a silent auction featuring art supplies, pottery, gift certificates, prints, and much more.

Ron Pettigrew, a friend of Adam's for many years, says she has earned the success she is now experiencing, and deserves every bit of help she can get.

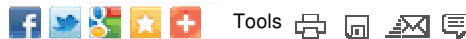
"She's been going strong with her work for several years now," said Pettigrew. "I'm just doing this to help a friend. She has a lot of talent and I think people should see her work."

Though conquering New York may seem to be the pinnacle of an artists career, Adams says she has even higher ambitions.

"Eventually I'd love to go to Paris and paint there. That's my dream."

Those interested in purchasing fundraiser tickets can contact Pettigrew at 780-669-0906, Samuelson at 780-987-3047, or Petrie at 780-987-3769.

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