



'Home and Abroad'

Allan Gillard's acrylic painting, "The Red Door."

Peter Lewis Gallery gets realistic

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THE TELEGRAM

Art gallery owner Peter Lewis went to Tuscany recently on a family holiday and came back with the inspiration for a new exhibit; one unlike any he's ever shown in his gallery before.

Lewis, an expressionist and pleinairist oil painter, has shown mainly colourful impressionistic pieces in the Peter Lewis Gallery on Church Hill since it opened in 2009. For the first time, he's exhibiting realistic art with "Home and Abroad," opening today.

Lewis and his wife and children were on vacation in Cortona, Italy when he pulled out his paints to take advantage of the scenery in the 14th-century village. A local woman approached him for a chat, and told him that she, too, was a painter. She also had a connection to Newfoundland, her great-grandfather being Sir Marmaduke Winter.

Winter and his brother established T&M Winter Ltd., one of the largest provision firms in Newfoundland. He also built Winterholme — once his residence, and now a bed and breakfast.

"While there, she took me around to different places around Cortona, painting — a field of sunflowers and places around the village itself," Lewis said.

Lewis returned the favour, inviting the woman, a watercolourist named Jennie Ryland, to visit Newfoundland for the first time. She arrived last month and stayed for about three weeks. Ryland found inspiration in the places Lewis showed her, including Grate's Cove, Portugal Cove and The Battery, as well as in spots she found by herself.

"She was really, really impressed — it reminded her a bit of home," Lewis said. Ryland divides her time between Cortona and Guernsey, in the Channel Islands. She's also used to the ocean, having lived for three years on a boat at one point.

"The colours were very different than what she experienced in Italy. She was saying it's a much different palette, and she was having difficulty with the colour of the ocean, which kept changing. The Mediterranean is a totally different colour."

Ryland also got the opportunity to spend some time at Winterholme.

"She actually spent a night (there), and slept in her great-grandfather's bedroom. She even slid down the bannisters," Lewis said with a laugh.

Lewis and gallery curator J.J. Allwood, have put some of Ryland's pieces together with paintings by Allan Gillard, Michael Kilburn and Michael Green for "Home and Abroad." Ryland's pieces were all completed during her visit here and include water-colour depictions of the coastline, The Narrows, the Bell Island ferry, and rural scenes showing stacked, orange crab pots and a clothesline blowing in the wind.

Gillard, a Newfoundlander now living in British Columbia, is known for his high-realist style of painting, and his incredibly lifelike wood burnings. His paintings in "Home and Abroad" are easily confused with photographs on first glance, particularly "The Red Door" — a close-up of a weather-beaten wooden door with knob, and an acrylic called "Rust in Peace."

"(It's) a large depiction of an old Ford truck with details that boggle the mind, from the bent metal filaments covering the engine, to the tiny details of each clover in the grass," Allwood said.

Greene's pieces include the dream-like oil on canvas "Harbour Le Cou Reflections," while Irish pleinairist Kilburn's include a view of stages in Salvage.

Lewis said he decided to stray from his typical style of exhibit in an effort to establish a bit of diversity in the gallery. He never planned to settle on one type of art, he said, but is naturally attracted to impressionism.

The pieces in "Home and Abroad" were chosen for a few reasons.

"I like the colour — I'm a real person for colour," he said. "I like the strong landscapes, and the mood. It fits together, kind of like a puzzle, with different pieces of art."

"Home and Abroad" will launch with a public reception between 2-5 p.m. today, and will run until Oct. 9.

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