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Island painter brings Georgian Bay landscapes to Shelburne gallery walls

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A familiar splash of colour has returned to Shelburne Town Hall Art Gallery as painter Wendy Wilson unveiled her latest hallway exhibition, a sequel to last year's show titled ?A Glimpse of Summer.?

This is Wilson's second time displaying at the town hall, after first exhibiting there in May 2024. The new collection, on display until May 22, was inspired by the landscapes of Georgian Bay and Muskoka. Her art lines the upper hallway outside council chambers, offering visitors a bright, seasonal preview as summer approaches.

The timing, Wilson notes, gives people a chance to find a piece that they like for the cottage or home.

?I did a display in May last year and May this year again, so that's probably why they call it a glimpse of summer,? Wilson said. ?Now that summer is coming, it's a good opportunity for someone to check out and purchase a piece to take to their cottage or put in their homes for the season, and then switch it out for a fall or winter.?

Wilson's work is rooted in the rugged shorelines and wind-shaped trees of Georgian Bay, where she lives, and in memories of summers spent at her grandmother's cottage on Lake Joseph.

?I live on an island out on Georgian Bay, and I'm inspired everywhere I look,? she said. ?I am in love with the white pine and the rock and the deep colored water of Georgian Bay. But I also grew up at my grandmother's Muskoka cottage on Lake Joseph, and I think that's where I was first originally inspired.?

Her paintings are impressionistic, built on strong colour, expressive brushwork and a recurring signature element: the use of purple in every piece.

Pines lean, twist and reach across rock outcrops; weather-bent trunks and branches are treated almost as characters, each with its own story. Rock formations, shorelines and deep water are rendered in bold tones that emphasize mood and movement over strict realism.

Behind the display is a lifelong commitment to the arts. Wilson originally planned to pursue art education but trained as a music teacher, spending years in the classroom while keeping visual art in the background ? designing backdrops and integrating creative projects into her lessons.

?Way back when, I probably would have been an art teacher, but the jobs were in French and music, so I went through to be a music teacher,? she said. ?I spent 25 years of my life teaching music, but art was always included in the backdrops or sometimes in class with the kids, just depending on what I was teaching music-wise. I tried to always bring art into it.?

As her painting practice grew, she sought out online courses and workshops, studying with multiple instructors and steadily developing a style that has gained increasing recognition.

With a vibrant collection of artwork on display, Wilson's constant push to improve and develop her skills has clearly paid off.

See ?A Glimpse of Summer II,? now on display until May 22 at the Shelburne Town Hall Art Gallery.