

## New art exhibit 'Plantopia' coming to Shelburne Town Hall Gallery



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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As a new season blooms, Shelburne residents will have the opportunity to glimpse the 'essence of plants' with a new exhibit at the Shelburne Town Hall Gallery.

The exhibit, titled 'Plantopia', features a collection of 36 pieces from Mono-based artist, Jo Thomson. Described as 'cameraless photographs' of botanicals, the exhibit will be on display from April 8 to 26.

'Nature really inspires me and I'm trying to capture that so other people can appreciate it too,' said Thomson about the new art exhibit. 'This is a really nice opportunity to have my work somewhere where more people might get to see. When you make something like this, you just want people to be able to enjoy it and experience it.'

Thomson grew up near the coast of Devon, England. After completing high school, she went on to study art and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in photography. In 2015, Thomson and her husband, Blair, along with their two children, moved from the UK to a 10-acre forested property in rural Mono.

Thomas began gathering and preserving a collection of foraged botanicals such as leaves, grass and dried flowers, as well as wild bird feathers that she discovered on her property, which would eventually become the subject matter for her traditional printing experimentation.

The result of the experimentation has been a collection of cyanotypes, blue-based images that are created using the sun's UV rays, and photograms, black-and-white prints developed using a traditional darkroom.

While both art forms have existed for more than 100 years and are based on traditional photographic printing methods, Thomson's pieces of work involve no camera or negative.

'The technique produces a reproduction of the plant without any human interaction,' explained Thomson. 'Every single print that I

make is an original because there is negative involved so there's no way of reproducing them; each one is unique.?

Thomson's exhibit 'Plantopia' will be on display at the Shelburne Town Hall Art Gallery until April 26. An opening reception for the exhibit is scheduled for April 14 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Thomson will be selling her original artwork ranging in prices from \$50 to \$650 plus tax. For each sale, 20 per cent of the money will be donated to Streams Community Hub in Shelburne.

'I think Streams is doing amazing work for the community of Shelburne. The arts are so important and it's something that is often overlooked. They have created this environment, which is open to all youth and adults in the community to go and learn something new,' said Thomson.

During the showcase, Thomson will also be selling other art items including art cards, bookmarks and smaller prints, which will be available for purchase at a lower price.

'I wanted to make it inclusive, if people wanted to buy something and help support Streams Community Hub and the arts,' said Thomson.