

Unity in Diversity art exhibit at Museum of Dufferin showcases works of 18 artists

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

While communities across the province celebrate Multicultural Month, the Museum of Dufferin is bringing diverse groups together with a new exhibit.

The Museum of Dufferin (MoD) and the Dufferin County Multicultural Foundation unveiled the 4th Annual Unity in Diversity art exhibition in the museum's Silo Gallery on Saturday (June 7).

Unity in Diversity is a juried multicultural art exhibition that looks to celebrate culture, identity and community. The art exhibition features a vibrant collection of works created by 18 talented artists from across Ontario.

"There are so many great artists in our community and art is such a great form of expressing who you are," said Althea Alli, founder of the Dufferin County Multicultural Foundation. "It's amazing to see this opportunity is given and that we continue to really build and create a space for our artists."

The Dufferin County Multicultural Art Show presented four awards: Juror's Choice, Youth Artist, Emerging Artist and Best in Show.

Kaiya Davoodian, a Grade 9 student from Centre Dufferin District High School in Shelburne, was presented with the Youth Artist Award for her piece "Glory to Ukraine." The painting depicts young Ukrainian girls dressed in traditional embroidered shirts while braiding their hair.

"[The exhibit] was an option for one of our projects in art class so I did this painting for the exhibit. I thought it would be fun to make a painting and be able to connect with my culture," said Davoodian.

Barrie-based artist, Faryal Shehzad was the recipient of the Juror's Choice Award. Her piece "Homecoming" is an homage to friendship depicting both Shehzad and a close friend, and serves as a reminder of the bonds that can grow between people from different walks of life.

"It's nice to not just be on the wall next to some really wonderful artists, but to also be able to represent my culture and background and to show how beautifully multicultural Canada really is," said Shehzad, who immigrated from Pakistan at the age of six. "This exhibit not only give the opportunity for people to express themselves and their own culture, but really celebrates it."

The Award for Emerging Artists was presented to Vishwa Patel for her diptych pieces "Jyoti" and "Jyotsna," which translate to "Light of the Sun" and "Light of the Moon". The two large tapestries showcase two women doing a traditional dance from a region of India that Patel is from. It was created in the traditional miniature painting style of India.

"I thought it would be interesting to blow them up to a large scale and work with textile because it's not really done in this style of painting," explained Patel. "It's a celebration of both the folk dance and also the textiles that come from that dance."

Melissa Boodoo, a Toronto-based artist, was the recipient of the Best in Show Award for her piece "The Lotus and the Koi No. 1". The piece of art, which is part of a large collection of works, is inspired by the symbols of Boodoo's Chinese and Trinidadian heritage.

"I spent a lot of my life questioning my identity, growing up biracial. I always treated myself like two different people instead of

embracing me as one person," said Boodoo. "Art is such a great way to explore identity and to have a community that support that journey is very validating."

The Unity in Diversity art show will be on display at the Museum of Dufferin's Silo Gallery until Aug. 30.

To learn more about the exhibit, visit dufferinmuseum.com.