



1515 Blanshard Art Gallery, Artist Profiles

In our last edition we featured our first profiles of two of the artists whose works hang on the walls at the Ministry of Health and for this edition we continue that feature – this time focusing on a branch administrator who uses acrylics to create a unique approach to art and an ophthalmologist who works with watercolours to emphasize the beauty of the natural world.



Erin Caudle

Drawing Outside the Lines

The Ministry of Health's art galleries provide opportunities to showcase local artists and their work. Erin Caudle is a branch administrator with the ministry and her work was featured in the Fall/Winter 2020-21 Gallery 5 art show. Art and creativity have been a part of Erin's life since her early childhood, and she learned from an early age about the powerful effects that painting could have on others. This became her motivation to come up with her own ideas, to "draw outside the lines," and continue to create new work over the years.

As Erin says, "I don't set out to create any intentional designs or patterns, I just do whatever comes to mind in the moment," and this has fueled her in her work as an artist.

Erin's Approach to Art

Erin's style is unique among many of the other artists showcased at the ministry, in that she does not use any paint brushes or tools in creating her art. Her approach is through acrylic pouring, which involves carefully pouring acrylic paint onto a canvas resulting in unique puddles, pools and marble-like patterns. As Erin describes, this allows her to create her works "with little or no outside elements to interfere with the process," allowing just the air and movement to support her creative process.

Due to this fluid approach to her creations, Erin is quick to state that her artworks are created relatively quickly, but this means that, in her words, some of them work and some don't, so she is able to experiment and try multiple pours. Erin states that this approach is perfect for her, as it allows her to create unique small moments in time.

Erin's Displays at the Ministry

When asked about which pieces were her favourite, Erin said that they are "always the ones that turn out as I least expect them to be." Her unique style has resulted in some pieces that she had intended to create one way, but turned out another, to her surprise and satisfaction. She says, "The pieces displayed in the gallery are all examples of how something different happened when I had a completely different desired outcome – in that, they became my favourite pieces."

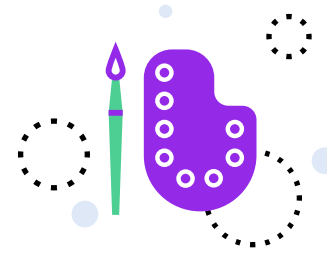


The Importance of the Ministry Galleries

Erin has expressed that she feels that the exposure artists get from the galleries at 1515 Blanshard is amazing and that she "likes to hang her art all over the place." Because Erin also works in the building, she has enjoyed that many people have reached out to her to tell her how much they enjoyed her art.

In addition to the ministry galleries, Erin has also had past art shows, including one currently at the Patchwork Gallery in Vancouver, with more coming in the future. She has had her work published in a book, volunteered for art therapy for mental health patients and even acquired a few celebrity commissions over the last year.

As Erin says, she started acrylic pouring to help free her mind and to be present in the moment of creating her work. In her approach there is no wrong answer or approach and the possibilities are endless.



Dr. Amaka Eneh

Rebelliously Positive Art

Dr. Amaka Eneh is a Victoria ophthalmologist who, for the first time, is sharing her work as an artist through the ministry's art galleries.

For Amaka it was a trip to Switzerland in 2018 that inspired her to start painting when she noticed some people who were painting en plein air (an art term referring to painting outdoors or in plain air). She did not think much of it at the time, but on her way home from Switzerland she stopped by her parents' home and managed to locate some old watercolors from when she was in grade school. Before she knew it, she found herself painting on the flight back to Victoria, and the rest, as they say, is history.

As Amaka highlights, "The cracking, student-grade paint tubes promptly gave way to artist-quality pigment, paper and brushes."

Amaka's Approach to Art

At the root of Amaka's approach to art is the search for the answer to the question, "How does the human mind interact with the visual world?" In her profession as an eye surgeon, Amaka spends many hours working with the human visual system and studying the "fascinating and infinitely complex" connections between the eye and the brain. Amaka admits that her exploration and creativity as an artist is linked to the fact that "nobody fully understands all the wiring that converts light beams into images, and then memories, emotions and reactions."

Using watercolours, Amaka focuses on the study of the interaction of sunlight with vegetation, such as a "blade of grass set ablaze by the light of the sun" or a "partially rotting leaf languishing on the ground." Due to this natural approach, Amaka emphasizes that she depicts the subjects as she sees them in nature, rarely staging it in any way. What this means is that if Amaka takes a photo of a leaf on the sidewalk, she paints what she sees as she sees it.

Amaka's Displays at the Ministry

For the latest display at 1515 Blanshard, Amaka has two works displayed, but her favourite is the one of a magnolia, which was created from a photo she took in the spring as she walked home from work. For this work Amaka notes that painting the flower seemed ordinary enough, but the real magic came when she added the shadows and the background. As she puts it, "beauty is best appreciated when juxtaposed with shadow and randomness."



The Importance of the Ministry Galleries

When the COVID-19 pandemic initially hit, Amaka experienced swings in her workload and this led to, "protracted periods of frustration and tedium alternated with moments of frustrating inertia." Art has been her "attempt at sublimation" – creating beauty "at a time of uncertainty, fear, and stress." For this reason, Amaka has expressed that she is very honoured to be able to share her work with the ministry – being able to bring some positivity to "others who have had a difficult year." Prior to having her work displayed at the ministry, Amaka had only hung her work for display at her office, so this is her first time sharing her work with a wider audience.

Amaka describes her art intentionally, and rebelliously positive. She focuses on working to showcase the beauty of that which is often overlooked. For her, since her background has been in science and medicine, it has been a completely new experience and she continues to enjoy it as she seeks to "depict the intrinsic beauty of her chosen subjects in their own fashion."

We welcome your input and feedback. Contact us at: MOHNNewsletter@gov.bc.ca

