



THE MARRIAGE *of* **OLD** *and* **NEW**

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT ■ PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



▲ Work in progress: in May the mural was being painted.



▲ The huge new mural on an old building, now called The Mutchmor, in Providence Bay, Manitoulin Island, is getting a lot of attention. Created by Bruno Smoky of Essencia Collective. PHOTO BY BRUNO SMOKY.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT A WEDDING, but it does involve something old and something new. Often both together. At its most obvious, this is about Edwards Art Studios' 20th anniversary and the established Williams Mill Arts Centre, as well as the openings of The Mutchmor and the new Red Door Gallery location. Old buildings have been transformed into new art space, and artists have revived old themes into new interpretations.



▲ Richard Edwards with his acrylic painting called “Reed Impression,” and pieces by some other artists in Edwards Art Studios: a woodworked cutting board, functional pottery and Barbara Edwards’ weaving.



▲ “High Altitude Prayer,” 7’x9’ by Ann Beam. Prayer flags from Tibet are included in this work exploring the spirit. PHOTO BY ANN BEAM.

TO CELEBRATE THEIR 20 YEARS OF having a gallery plus art studio, this summer Richard and Barbara Edwards held several workshops on the topics of landscape painting, fused glass, bead creation, spinning and weaving, jewellery making and pottery.

20 Years of Edwards

In 1996 the couple renovated the upper floor of the old mill in Kagawong on the north shore of Manitoulin Island and created a gallery, shop and working studio. It is a large room with a view; the North Channel is visible from the deep-silled windows and the space is light and bright.

“Everything in the gallery is handmade, one of a kind,” says Richard as he moves among the displays. All work by the various local artists is for sale. There are paintings and prints, glass pieces, jewellery, clothing, woodwork, quilts and more. He emphasizes that all the pottery, which is popular in their gallery, is functional, food safe and oven safe.

His own work is watercolour and acrylic landscapes done on and from location, as well as serigraphy or silk screening. Barbara is a weaver, stained-glass and fused-glass worker, a lamp work bead maker and jeweller. Acrylic

paintings by their son Morgen Edward makes this gallery a family business.

Much More in Providence Bay

On the south shore of Manitoulin Island, in the beach community of Providence Bay, the former Home Hardware building has been renamed The Mutchmor and turned into artists’ spaces. Most dramatically, the exterior south wall of the building has been filled with a huge mural.

“It is a new artistic hub and café that welcomes all people to come and enjoy the peace of Providence Bay,” says owner Matthew Garniss. “We are showcasing art and hand-crafted goods from artists on Manitoulin Island as well as introducing artists and products from makers around Canada to the island and the tourists that visit it.”

Artist Ann Beam’s work is carried in the gallery. One piece that’s available is “High Altitude Prayer,” a large mixed-media work with prayer flags incorporated into the acrylic paint. This is Ann’s story of how the painting came to be:

“In the early ‘90s Carl [Beam, her husband] and I bought prayer flags and strung them about 10 feet off the ground, connecting the back of our adobe house, with the front of our

Artists at Edwards Art Studios

Richard Edwards, acrylics

Barbara Edwards, glass, weaving

Morgan Edwards, acrylics

Paula Walsh, pottery

Libby Dornbush, textile art

Maggie Nardi, pottery

Beth Campbell, pottery

Mark Kelner, pottery

Darlene Bryan, wood working

David Leeson, wood working

David Solomon, handmade wooden boxes

Ann Suzuki, batik silk clothing

adobe studio. It was a nice shady, cool and sometimes windy place, where we would sit under the prayer flags and feel good, and be calm. Sometimes we would stand under them and send off a prayer to Source Energy and the Universe!

“I have been doing multi-media artwork for a long time, and I always like to vitalize things, and make the art new, with the things that speak to my heart. I created





◀ Work in The Mutchmor created by some of the other artists: Shalak Attack from Essencia Collective (opposite page), Linda Williamson (above left), Madonna Aeschlimann (top right), Vladimir Kabelik (bottom right). PHOTOS BY MATTHEW GARNISS.

Some Mutchmor Artists

Madonna Aeschlimann
 Shalak Attack of Essencia Collective
 Ann Beam
 Vladimir Kabelik
 Bruno Smoky of Essencia Collective
 Linda Williamson

many art works putting the recycled prayer flags into the paint, juxtaposing other images with them. Many small pieces and also this big one, 'High Altitude Prayer.'

"This particular painting was created outside, on the ground, and it was pretty windy. This was good, because that wind energy is clearly in the painting! As I was working it even began to rain a little, which is also observable in the dripping of the paint!

"I have been working with Earth images since the dawn of the new Millennium, the year 2000. I began with putting a heart glyph over the earth like a medicine additive. Then over years, the heart glyph evolved into a rainbow over the Earth.

Prayer flags launch their medicine/spiritual content into the universe by contacting with the wind. I thought they were a natural match to juxtapose with the Earth image."

Challenge of Williams Mill

Williams Mill Visual Arts Centre is a set of buildings located in the centre of the village of Glen Williams. The story of its creation is the result of dedication, hard work and love by its owners Doug and Mary Lou Brock. Some of the buildings go back to the early 19th century but had suffered from neglect.

"There has been an industrial facility here from the 1820s," says Doug. "I always admired the buildings as something that could be restored. I knew the buildings would have some use because of their location. My parents instilled in me the belief in restoring furniture and buildings but I fell in love with this location. I took it as a challenge, one step at a time."

"I call it Doug's dream and my nightmare," quips Mary Lou. "It has to be small steps. Doug does things very methodically and slowly. He does things right."

In 1985 the Brocks bought the old buildings, for a low cost that Doug doesn't want to disclose because it is misleading

due to the large amount of money spent on them since. They were so dilapidated that at least one heritage expert advised tearing them down. Instead, they began a gradual program of preservation and restoration by renting out a sound building and using the rental income to rebuild the others, sometimes with the aid of heritage grants.

In 1994 they began the arts theme for the buildings, renting space to their first artist. Now the centre includes two restored old buildings, a new gallery shop addition, a glass-blowing studio, and most recently, a dining tavern, for about 30 artists in the media of painting, sculpture, weaving, wood carving, textile art, jewellery and more.

"I take pleasure from taking on projects that no one thinks possible, and finding out that I can accomplish more than I think," says Doug.

Red Door Reopens

After some difficulties with arrangements at its previous location, Red Door Gallery has re-opened at a new address on Main Street in downtown Georgetown. Art shows will be complemented by musical performances, spoken word events, a day-time seniors'



▲ Some of the buildings at Williams Mill near the terraced garden: the renovated old Stone Building with, at the corner, the remarkable life-size bronze sculpture of an elephant by Gabrielle Fischer.



▲ Barbara Edwards' glass beads made into jewellery displayed with her woven shawls.



▲ Doug and Mary Lou Brock, founders and owners of Williams Mill Visual Arts Centre.

“When working on a painting I hope to evoke that moment of original inspiration for the viewer. I know I have achieved this goal when I can hear the wind rustling through the trees and water lapping against the shore.”



▲ The remains of the old building, once a sawmill, built in Glen Williams by Benajah Williams in the early 19th century. PHOTO PROVIDED BY WILLIAMS MILL VISUAL ARTS CENTRE.



▲ At Williams Mill today, the old sawmill building after renovation, now called the Yellow Building. Upstairs inside can still be seen charred timbers that were scorched when the building caught sparks from a long-ago forest fire. No serious damage was caused.



▲ Shelley Newman, artist in residence at Red Door Gallery, with some of her landscapes.

program and painting evenings. Space will also be available for emerging artists. Shelley Newman, a Georgetown painter of landscapes done *en plein air* as well as in studio, is now the artist in residence.

She says “I have been given an opportunity to find inspiration by interacting with the public and emerging artists. By changing my work space to the downtown studio I am taken out of my comfort zone and forced to adapt to a new environment. This will be a bit of a shake up creatively and a time of exploration and discovery for me.”

Shelley became a full-time artist in 2011. Of her work, she

explains “I hope to capture the vast dramatic beauty of Canada’s wild spaces. I travel throughout northern Ontario and B.C., painting and photographing landscape scenes that will later become my realistic, large, studio paintings done in oil. When working on a painting I hope to evoke that moment of original inspiration for the viewer. I know I have achieved this goal when I can hear the wind rustling through the trees and water lapping against the shore.” **NEV**

Gloria Hildebrandt and Mike Davis are the founders and publishers of Niagara Escarpment Views.