

Escarpment Treasures:

ANNUAL SPOTLIGHT ON ARTISTS

By Gloria Hildebrandt | Photos by Mike Davis EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



There is such a wealth of art and fine craftwork all along the Niagara Escarpment that every autumn we shine a spotlight on several artists whose work has caught our eye over the past year. Painters, potters, photographers, weavers, woodworkers, jewellery designers and more, offer treasures to love, keep and pass on.



▲ Owen Sound Artists' Co-op occupies 5,000 square feet of the McKay heritage building downtown. Filled with the works of 45 member artists and craftworkers, its treasures can take so long to examine fully, that Birgit's Pastry Café at the back is a welcome place for refreshment.



This year's annual focus on Escarpment art is on Don Kilby of Clarksburg, Don Sankey and Telfer Wegg of Owen Sound Artists' Co-op, Circle Arts in Tobermory, Dragonfly Arts on Broadway in Orangeville, and Kent Wilkens of Tobermory.

Don Kilby

Originally a commercial artist known for book cover illustrations, Don Kilby began

painting fine art about 10 years ago. Having moved to Clarksburg four years ago, and focusing on local scenery and landscapes, he finds the proximity to Georgian Bay and Beaver Valley gives him rich opportunities for inspiration. He works in acrylics, sometimes from photos, describing his style as painterly realism, yet he creates his own compositions from separate elements.

"My goal is to find things to paint that are out of the way. Things you might pass by, like relics, fencelines or old tractors," Don says.

He uses the frames for his works to add a signature touch. Some rural scenes are framed by beautiful old weathered barnboard. Other subjects are surrounded by metal pieces with a patina of age. His richly detailed study of a tree stump in a lush maple forest has a frame of maple wood.

"A lot of thought goes into the frame for each work," he says. Don's charming storefront studio gallery displays original paintings, pencil drawings and limited edition prints.

"I limit my print offerings to runs of 12," he adds, "so there's



◀ Far left: Don Kilby uses part of his storefront gallery as his studio. On the wall is one of his completed “old vehicle” paintings.

◀ Left: Don Kilby makes his own unique frames for all his work. The large pieces from left, have a weathered barnboard frame for “North o’ Fergus,” a frame of old metal around the work called “As the Crows Fly,” and new maple wood framing his piece “Winterstump.” Below are some of his small works.

▼ Don Sankey’s Niagara Escarpment-themed photographs are available as framed works, images on canvas and as plaques.



some exclusivity and value to them.” He will work in large formats, because “there’s an appetite for big, impressive pieces, but not exclusively as not everyone has the space or money for big pieces.”

Don takes on commissioned work, with pet dogs in gorgeous landscapes being popular with customers.

“I always do my best to be sure that...these

commissioned paintings meet my own expectations for every painting I do, and will be included proudly in my own body of work,” is a statement on his website.

He enjoys painting old vehicles, yet he originally doubted that there would be a market for them. “Who is going to want to look at a slightly menacing rusted out old road warrior?” he blogged

on his website. His head-on view of a huge old Mack truck, entitled “The Roadmaster,” won first prize in one of the categories of the 2017 Blue Mountain Center for the Arts juried art show. “This painting is commented on favourably more than almost any other piece I have done,” he marvels.

Don offers individual and group classes in drawing and painting, to people who

are complete beginners, up to experienced painters. He aims for a fun, casual atmosphere, not minding people dropping in for classes as they are able to.

He himself often works on three or four pieces at a time, and explains “The sparkle in a painting comes in at the end.” He has clarity about his professional goals, saying “I hope there’s a lifetime of



▲ Telfer Wegg with his display of photographs, postcards, notecards and books. This day he was taking his turn as sales clerk.



▲ Most of the members of Owen Sound Artists' Co-op, photographed in their shop last year by Telfer Wegg, far right.

enjoyment in my work. I try to offer something that will make a lasting impression.”

Don can be reached through donkilby.com and at 519.372.7971.

Owen Sound Artists' Co-op

With 45 member artists and a 5,000-square-foot retail space with internal café, there's a lot going on at the downtown

Owen Sound Artists' Co-op. Although the Co-op has existed for 23 years, it was only in January 2016 that it moved to the McKay building on 2nd Avenue, a long-time former department store. A wide array of media in arts and craft is on offer, from acrylics to woodwork.

Don Sankey is a photographer whose subjects reveal a love of the Niagara







▲ Circle Arts co-owners from left, Glenda Burrell, Arlene Kennedy and Simon White among some striking art: live-edge chairs and table by Dan Gibb, with a painting by Joel Masewich.

◀ Just one small corner of Dragonfly Arts on Broadway, which is jam-packed with art treasures to discover. More than 200 artists are represented by this shop/studio in Orangeville.

Escarpment. Specializing in flora and fauna, he sells framed photographs, photos printed on canvas, and plaque-mounted images.

“I enjoy exploring and capturing the ruggedness of the cliffs, rocks, boulders and the dramatic shoreline along Georgian Bay,” he says.

Photographer Telfer Wegg, who happened to be staffing the store on the day interviews were done, specializes in outdoor and travel photography. His images are available framed and unframed, on notecards and

on photo CDs in flip-album form. He also has published the full-colour photo books *Searching for Grey-Bruce*; *Neustadt, the Story of an Ontario Village*; *The Beauty and Bounty of Huron County*; and *Rural Routes, Exploring the Back Roads of Saugeen Country*.

Yet with a puzzled shake of his head, he confides “My photo of six cats on steps happens to be my bestseller!”

For more, see artistscoop.ca or call 519.371.0479.

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Circle Arts

Located at Tobermory's Little Tub Harbour, Circle Arts is a gallery with a mission to sell the work of "some of Canada's finest artists and artisans, many of whom are inspired by the unique energy, spirit and landscape of Georgian Bay and the Bruce Peninsula."

Representing 60 artists in all media, the gallery owners say they "want to appeal to as wide a market as possible, and to represent

the spirit and nature of the environment of the area, including First Nations artists."

Begun 48 years ago, the gallery displays the works of many artists who have been there since the 1970s. Yet "every year we try to bring in two or three new artists," says co-owner Simon White.

European and U.S. customers come to the gallery each year to add to their collections, joined in recent years by visitors from

mainland China. Interest is growing for the unusual sculptures of Betty Nelson-Daniel, whose fanciful Mocking Birds are figures that resemble part birds, part dressed dolls, part theatrical sculptures, and are formed into dramatic poses suggestive of dance, modelling, hunting or pow wow.

See them and more at circlearts.com or call the gallery at 519.596.2541.

Dragonfly Arts on Broadway

"The focus of the shop is hand-crafted Canadian fine art and fine craft," says owner and jewellery artist Joan Hope. More than 200 artists are represented in various media including metal, stone, bronze, textiles, leather, wood, glass, sculpture, paintings, pottery.

Prices for works reach up to \$5,000 for a painting, but for just \$2 each, you can buy original, pinnable



▲ Kent Wilkens of Golden Gallery in Tobermory, with new work.



▲ Roslyn Levin paints in "sumi-e" or Oriental brushstrokes on rice paper. Her studio is in Dragonfly Arts on Broadway.

art buttons to wear.

Roslyn Levin paints in “sumi-e,” which she describes as “reaching within myself, becoming one with flow of ink & brush, to share my spirit with the image on the page.”

Get more information at dragonflyarts.ca or call 519.941.5249.

Kent Wilkens

Prolific painter Kent Wilkens, who owns Golden Gallery in Tobermory, also has a

selection of his prints on board the Chi-Cheemaun ferry in their “Boatique.”

“My current focus is local landscapes,” he notes. “Sunsets, sunrises, shorelines, trees, rocks, sky, as always. Currently concentrating on Bruce Peninsula and Tobermory, but I have one in progress of Jerusalem as well.”

Reach Kent through wilkens-art.com or 519.596.2280. **NEV**

