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Encaustic artist to open show at Williams Mill next week

By **EMILY YATES**

Special to The Independent & Free Press

Mary Ellen Chapman, Georgetown resident and artist, introduces her *rocked by water* collection in a new exhibit at Williams Mills Visual Arts Centre in Glen Williams, April 21-25.

A meet-the-artist reception will be held on Saturday, April 24, 7-9 p.m.

Chapman is a visual art teacher at Notre Dame High School in Brampton. She has taken her class on numerous trips to the Mill through the years to speak with the artists and gain knowledge about their craft and career opportunities in the arts.

"They've kind of adopted me," says Chapman. Though she doesn't have a studio there, Williams Mill has allowed her to display her work on previous occasions.

Chapman paints from photographs she takes at her brother's island in Red Bay, Ont. She investigates the colours and textures of water hovering over rocks and uses a technique called encaustic painting—a pigment embedded in wax technique. Encaustic process uses (most commonly) beeswax and some sort of flat heat source.

For her heat source, Chapman uses a hotplate. She heats a metal plate and her brushes on this hotplate and applies the wax to the hot surfaces. She applies the waxes to a firm board to prevent the wax from cracking (as it would on canvas). When she's done her art piece, Chapman uses a heat gun to fuse all of the layers together.

"It kind of looks like a river of crayon," says Chapman. "It's very difficult to get a level of realism, but I can achieve it by standing



MARY ELLEN CHAPMAN

on my head," she adds with a chuckle.

She first heard about encaustic art from a friend who had taken a course on it in previous years. Chapman signed up for a week-long class at the Haliburton School of the Arts in 2004.

In the past, Chapman has exhibited her work at Gallery 888 in downtown Toronto and at group exhibitions at the Williams Mill and in Toronto.

For those just starting out or interested in starting encaustic artwork, there are a few things one should keep in mind.

Chapman explains, "If you're not handling it properly, it can be toxic. You have to make sure you're always heating to below 200 degrees Fahrenheit." It

is also important to work in a well-ventilated room.

"Be patient, because it takes a lot," says Chapman. "If you're patient, you will reap the rewards."

For more information about Chapman or to view some of her artwork, visit www.mellen.ca.



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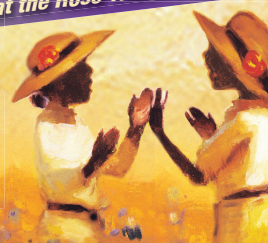
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