

THE ARTS

Warkworth's Portelli Gallery expands repertoire

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With 2004 headed into autumn and much of a successful year behind him, Paul Portelli of Paul Portelli Gallery in Warkworth is making even bigger plans for 2005.

The professional full-time sculptor who lives and works in Warkworth, has operated a gallery on Main Street in the village for 15 years. The gallery is a showcase of his work and a variety of works of some of Canada's finest artists.

Last year the gallery owner took a cautious approach to promoting guest artists. He admits it was a testing ground.

And, while his terra cotta pieces sold well, he wasn't happy with the sales of the other artists' works.

So, this year he decided he had to spend money to make money - and it's worked. He has promoted his featured artists more aggressively and sales have gone up. His last artist, Lenni Workman, a veteran of 24 shows, with paintings in nine notable collections, sold 19 of the 25 pieces in her Portelli show.

Currently, Paul is hosting a joint exhibition of John Ottewill's highly-detailed carved wood relief, and Larry Burnett's functional, hand-carved chairs. That show runs to August 31.

Right on its heels, Jenifer Lawton steps



PHOTO BY BOB OWEN

Paul Portelli, left, and carver John Ottewill stand in front of the artist's carved wood relief works. The show ends on August 31.

in with her oil on canvas. Her work is described as bold and explosive. Her paintings celebrate colour and contrast on a grand scale.

In her bio, Ms. Lawton says, "I look for snippets of life which other people walk on by, and then enlarge them enough to have the viewers step back and look again, and then walk through..."

The contrast from the current exhibition to the next is typical of the variety of works that arrive in the gallery.

The Ottewill work is subtle, yet delicately formed. It takes close examination to really appreciate the craftsmanship in the carving. Flanking the door into the gallery are the rich mellow wood chairs of Larry Burnett - works of art to be viewed and used.

Paul already has in place most of his artists for 2005. And there are more of

them.

This year he found that in many cases most of the artists' works were sold within the first three weeks of the opening. The exhibitions started to look tired.

Customers tend to visit or pass by stores every 10 days, says the gallery owner. They like to see something new. So, next year he is planning to bring in new exhibitions every three weeks. There will be more new work on a regular basis. About 10 artists are already lined up, with three or four others currently being considered.

It's not surprising that the creator of whimsical circus animals, dragons with attitude, functional pieces and figurative works is so successful. He welcomes everyone who enters his gallery like a friend, warming them with his love of art. Paul admits that sales are important, but he clearly relishes the enjoyment others get in viewing the works in his gallery.

He's quick to give credit to his business partner, Derrick Wendel. Paul calls him the anchor. Paul is the balloon, the man with ideas. Derrick anchors the business, not letting his partner get too carried away.

Not surprisingly, Derrick recognizes Paul's many creative talents, seeing them as vital to the business.

It's an approach that works. The partners both acknowledge widespread support for their gallery in the community. They, in return, are big boosters of Warkworth. And they are building a reputation, drawing in visitors from great distances to view quality exhibitions.

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The Colborne Branch makes deliveries every two weeks. In the Castleton area, contact the library for specific details.

In some instances, home delivery to an individual has continued for years; in other instances, for just a few weeks.

If you or an acquaintance wish to take advantage of this service, call the library and tell them who your favourite authors are and the type of reading material (books and/or magazines) you prefer.

"The Cramahne Township Library Board will do our best to help," says Ted Pedlar.

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