

Artist shares Daily Practice in new exhibit

COLBORNE — I had a remarkable visit with Elizabeth Hutchinson in her studio recently.

Walking into her quiet work space is like entering a jewel box, with tiny representational paintings lined up on shelves.

Hutchinson shared some thoughts about her feature show Daily Practice at the Colborne Art Gallery, which is slated to open in early March. I even got to view some of the paintings that will be exhibited.

I have to be honest here: strict representation is rarely my cup of tea, but these enchanting oil paintings pulled me right in. Her subjects for this show are mostly quiet domestic still-life scenes, some lively studies of birds and also watercolour sketches.

When I asked her if she is strict

about the observation as opposed to more abstract expressions of the world, she answered, "No, but I select the things to emphasize and leave the rest."

"Really, you are seeing light. You don't want to share all that muck-a-muck in the shadows. Otherwise you haven't made any decisions; it can have a suffocating effect and feel constricted."

"Photography is completely democratic — everything is described," she continued.

"With painting, you share with the viewer the things you notice particularly."

"Put light on anything, and it's gorgeous. It's a conversation about the shadow mass and a specific area of local colour — usually it's right where the light hits the objects — and if you aren't con-

nected to this process in an emotional way, how can you expect the viewer to be connected?"

Hutchinson was generous with sharing her process.

She begins with a tiny, prepared board. She explained how the pace of painting really changes as she progresses.

First, laying out the bones of the composition is fast and energetic. She explained that you shouldn't make decisions about the edges at the gate.

"If there is too much fuss at this stage, things become static. You put in the dark and light idea, which is the big idea."

Then, as she focuses on those magical edges that get the light, everything slows down.

Hutchinson's training was thorough and academic, first at OCAD in Toronto and later at the University of Guelph. She then spent many years in New York City completing a Master's at the New York Academy of Art, continued study at the New York Studio School and at the Art Students League.

In the end, she has made departures.

"I am grateful that I did all that, but now I find it so deadly," she said.

Hutchinson is finding her own way, including a return to live in Carrying Place, Ont., where she grew up. A few lucky students study with her, and she makes painting trips abroad. She is clear about her choices.

"This is my life. This is my stuff. The birds are here every day. My



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The art of Elizabeth Hutchinson will be spotlighted in the new Colborne Art Gallery exhibit Daily Practice.

studio is a spare bedroom, and this is the way I want to be painting" she summed up.

Her feature show, Daily Practice, opens March 8 at the Colborne Art Gallery, along with a small show of new Annie McDonald ceramic works entitled Thaw and works by

gallery artists.

There will be a reception from 2 to 4 p.m. with artists present. All are always welcome to attend and admission is always free.

The exhibit runs through April 13. The gallery is located at 51 King St. E. in Colborne, and hours are

Thursday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

For more information, call 905-355-1798 or visit www.thecolborneartgallery.ca.

Annie McDonald is a Colborne Art Gallery member artist.

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