

Travelling artist returns, for now

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Jennifer Cloutier can't stay in one place for very long.

Traveling to new and exotic places is crucial for her growth as an artist.

Last week, she displayed examples of her adventures through Asia, Europe and Australia during a Windsor art show she titled Passport Photos.

Originally from Maidstone, Cloutier began painting at a young age. After studying fine arts at the University of Windsor, she gathered up enough cash to travel to the land down under for a year in 1999.

She made her way across the country taking photographs and painting watercolours, developing her own unique style as an artist.

By the time she ran out of money and made plans to return home, it was too late – the travelling bug had already bitten her.

"I couldn't deal with



Maidstone-born artist Jennifer Cloutier stands next to her paintings displayed at the Windsor Arts Council Gallery last week. Cloutier's show, Passport Photos, is a series of photographs and acrylic paintings inspired by her travels across the world.

being in a small town again," Cloutier said. "So I stayed here for about six months until I could save enough money to get a one-way ticket out west on a Greyhound bus."

She moved into an apartment in downtown Calgary and began immersing herself into the art scene. She shared

a building with 50 other artists practising different styles – mosaics, sculpture, painting and fibre art.

But before long, her feet began to itch and she knew it was time to pack up her camera and head abroad once again.

"With travelling, you can learn so much," she said.

"Every time you move to another country or just go to another place. Even just stepping outside your own box, even your own town. Anytime I can get a chunk of change together I take off."

During the course of her travels, Cloutier has captured in her lens the romance of Vienna, the landscapes of rural France and the ancient

religious monuments of Thailand.

She was drawn to the mysteries of foreign cultures and architecture, which she began photographing from different angles as a way to draw the viewer's eye into its patterns.

She often makes paintings of her photos, adding raised texture on the canvas to

enrich the swirling waters of rivers or the cracks of old buildings.

The expressive faces of children also show up in her photos and Cloutier says meeting new and interesting people has been one of the most rewarding aspects of her travelling.

"When you meet someone from a different country, you're just blown away by what they think is important in life," she said. "When you leave it's so hard to come back (to Canada). You're just a different kind of thinking, what life am I living, what am I doing? Because you get wrapped back up in consumerism pretty quick. I try to keep the same things that I've learned from travelling. You can't take life for granted."

Cloutier originally exhibited Passport Photos in Calgary before taking it to the Windsor Arts Council last week. She said her friends and family haven't seen her work for several years and she wanted them to see how travelling helped her work to grow.

To view paintings and photography by Cloutier on the web, visit www.jennifercloutier.com.

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