

ARTS: Stouffville's McNeice showcased in Port Perry

# Painter vacations with purpose

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Stouffville painter Ray McNeice is excited to be holding his first solo exhibition in Port Perry this month.

A graphic artist for 40 years, he did a bit of painting while studying at the Ontario College of Art but says he had done very little before that.

However he was "intrigued enough to continue to pursue it," returning to art about 13 years ago and joining a group of plein air painters, The Roadside Artists.

While his subject matter varies, Mr. McNeice most often paints watercolours because he likes the challenge.

"The big thing is the fact that you can't paint over, what you get down, that's it," he says. "It becomes a part of the paper, so you have to think ahead of your painting."

Mr. McNeice enjoys plein air painting, a French expression meaning "in the open air," because, unlike painting in a studio, he can experience the immediacy, the sights and smells and sounds of a location.

## ROADSIDE ARTISTS

"I think when you're painting outside everything works its way into your painting in some fashion," he says.

"I find with my paintings, I can look at them and go right back to when I painted them, whether it was eight years ago or last week."

He notes that another advantage of work-

ing in watercolours is it's a travel-friendly medium. He also does pen-and-ink works, but Mr. McNeice says the show will feature only watercolours, roughly 30 pieces.

As for subject matter, he prefers small-town Ontario and Quebec scenes and sitting down in an isolated spot in the bush.

## STOUFFVILLE STUDIO TOUR

"I like pure landscape, something done in the forest, if I can do it without being plagued by bugs," Mr. McNeice said.

He says the "strong diagonals" in his work betray his background as a graphic artist.

While he will take photographs, especially if he's somewhere where he can't sit down to work on a painting or is in a rush, Mr. McNeice uses them primarily for reference. For the most part, he says a work is 90 per cent finished on site before he leaves and finishes it later.

He helped found the Stouffville Studio Tour, in its 11th year in 2011. The free, self-guided tour is Oct. 15 and 16 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., featuring 36 artists at 23 venues. Learn more at [www.stouffvillestudiotour.com](http://www.stouffvillestudiotour.com).

Mr. McNeice's wife is also a painter, and when they go on a trip, it's with a purpose.

"Our holidays are painting holidays," he said. "The country is amazing and I've only explored a small part of it."

Mr. McNeice's show is at the Kent Farndale Gallery, in the Scugog Memorial Public Library at 231 Water St., Port Perry.

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