

Artists reveal urban experience

Lisa MacColl
Special to Londoner

Five artists are pooling their talents and bringing an exhibit entitled Urban Exposures to The Arts Project from August 30 to September 17, 2016. The show features the artwork of DNA Dodds, Thomas Hlavacek, Frances Patella, Dominique Prévost and Ross Winter. Dodds, Hlavacek, Patella and Winter are photographers and Prévost is an award winning watercolour artist.

The artists are all members of the Propeller Centre for Visual Arts in Toronto, and this show is a revised version of one that Dodds, Hlavacek, Patella and Winter showed previously. Prévost is a new and welcome edition. "We all live in the city and have been

influenced by urban architecture and the urban environment. This show will feature our unique interpretations of what living in an urban area means to us. It's a cohesive group with unique perspectives to share," said Thomas Hlavacek.

Hlavacek's theme is Go. He is a photographer fascinated by things in motion. He photographs trains at night, at different angles and distances. The light refraction and movement end up looking almost abstract in their appearance. The works he is exhibiting was inspired by the Go train, a stable of the public transit system in Toronto. "My work tends to be semi-abstract bordering on abstract. Trains are transitory and photographing them at night gives lots of different effects of light emanating on

film," said Hlavacek.

Dodds is a street photographer who enjoys capturing images of seemingly mundane things. Patella enjoys taking photographs of the same area over time, showing the changes in the environment or landscape, and also works in mixed media. Winter's background in architecture, influenced by the Bauhaus method draws him to graphic lines, collages and strong lines and visuals. Prévost is an award winning watercolour and mixed media artist who draws inspiration from her surroundings to create.

Hlavacek says the group's body of work will appeal to a wide range of artistic tastes because of the diversity of approach to the subject. While there are elements of surprise in the exhibits, there



Setting up the show in 2015.

is nothing graphic or shocking, making the show suitable for all ages.

"The function of art is to make us approach reality in a different way. When there is an element of surprise, it challenges our perception and our notions, and forces us to look at things differently. We may all look at the same street scene and see very different things. Our exhibit shows that a city is a multi-faceted environment with many experiences and perceptions. There are diverse ways of depicting the urban experience," said Hlavacek.

"None of us have shown in London before, to the best of

my knowledge, and we are hoping to attract a new audience with this show. There is something for everyone to take something away in our works, and we hope people come with curiosity and without

pre-conceived expectations so they can enjoy a visual and thematic approach to urban living," said Hlavacek.

For more information:
www.urbanexposureshow.com

If You Go:

Urban Exposures Art Show and Sale
August 30 to September 17, 2016
Opening Reception, Saturday September 10, 2016
1:00p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Open Tuesday-Saturday, 12:00-5:00 p.m.
The Arts Project
203 Dundas Street, London, Ontario
519.642.2767
There is no charge.

Multiple factors tied to hot London real estate market

"These are interesting times for London real estate," Bruce Smith, mortgage broker with Casb Management Group says. "A good time to sell in response to increasing demand and increased selling prices."

6,295 residential homes have been sold in London and the surrounding area during the first seven months of 2016. Sales are on pace to make this the most active year in history for London real estate.

Smith is among those real estate experts who suggest the question of how long this vibrant market remains may be answered by many factors affecting demand, some unique to London, and some simply beyond their control.

The recent spike in sales goes beyond traditional factors affecting the housing market, such as low-interest rates and employment levels, experts say. With low-interest rates in place for many years, this would not account for the surge this year. The unemployment rate in London exceeds both the provincial and national average. "For every positive news story such as Sodecia, we find a negative story such as Kellogg's, so we can safely discount job creation as a catalyst," Smith says.

Currently, the two largest population segments in London are the 25-34 and 50-59 age groups. First-time buyers typically drive the real estate market, Smith argues, saying



Mortgage broker Bruce Smith says that while the real estate market will stay hot for the foreseeable future political factors and economic pressures could change that positive outlook.

that a case could be made that these 25-34 years old are either entering the real estate market for the first time or are

upgrading their homes with an expanding family.

Meanwhile, the 50-59-year-olds could be "empty nesters" and may be looking to downsize, so a natural fit would be that their current homes are being purchased by the younger demographic. Smith warns that the number of residents replacing the 25-34-year-old age group in the next five years falls off dramatically, so this suggests less first time home buyers in the future.

"I believe the biggest reason for the current need for London housing is simply the immigration of new people to London. We will learn more when the 2016 census data is released next spring," Smith says "We added approximately

14,000 new residents between 2006 and 2011 but it would not surprise me if that number close to doubles by the end of this current five-year cycle."

The reason for immigration is twofold, Smith says, adding "both are a result of what is happening with our neighbours to the east."

Toronto adds about 100,000 new immigrants each year. Smith puts that figure in perspective by stating, "a new city the size of London is created every four years."

This increase in population puts pressure on real estate prices in Toronto, forcing many new immigrants to take up residence in smaller communities such as London where the cost of housing is more affordable. "You see this trend predominantly in other communities such as Barrie, Oshawa, Hamilton, Kitchener etc; cities accessible to Toronto by rapid transit. Toronto is also popular with foreign investors who see holding real estate as a safe haven for their investment dollars, subsequently driving up the cost of real estate," Smith explains.

The second group of immigrants is made up of transplanted Torontonians, who

Smith explains "are seizing the opportunity of the real estate bonanza, by selling their Toronto homes and retiring in London. With the disparity in the cost of housing and our attractive health care and living options, London has become a logical retirement destination."

Smith says, "The price of Toronto real estate will be interesting to track over the next year," listing a variety of reasons. British Columbia recently introduced a new 15% transfer tax on foreign investors purchasing real estate, in an effort to slow the housing bubble in cities such as Vancouver and Victoria. Smith argues that "if Ontario adopted a similar policy, that might slow down the Toronto market and reverse the exodus trend to cities such as London."

He adds that one additional variable to monitor is the November U.S. election. If Donald Trump is elected President, he has promised a renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. "That alone could have a huge impact on the Ontario economy, and could change the real estate market overnight," Smith says.

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