



Derry show exhibits the fabric of life

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COLBORNE - Looking through the eye of an artist we see abstract concepts such as love, personal conflict, loss, to name a few, take physical form in their work.

Veronica Derry is an artist who translates the abstract ideas of home and the relationships that shelter there using old fabrics. Old, as in well and lovingly used; old as in perfectly saved for decades and then carefully chosen to carry emotional and intuitive weight.

She has mounted a show of 14 new pieces at the Colborne Art Gallery which will run until Nov. 13.

Set within recesses surrounded by the bold lines of unadorned frames, layers of lovingly worn fabrics and crisp old print fabrics have been cut, pinned, sewn and tied into place.

The stories they tell are varied. One talks of a 30-year relationship. Another of rural life. One goes into the details of the physical body. Others are more abstract and their composition take the viewer away from the home but the materials remind that they were made at home.

Home is a concept, is a focus, is a place, is a retreat and much more for Derry.

Her art is all about home, in fact.

Nostalgia is a word that comes naturally to mind when looking at her work. But she is not suffering homesickness, a common understanding of the word. Derry's world view, seen through the eye of her work, appears to promote home as a place where life albeit lovingly worn, is textured, the ends are frayed as our relationships and

There is a recurrent human figure in her work, feminine, that is always approachable as well as the shape of a house, or door, in general, an opening. She offers an inviting way into her world figuratively and literally.

"As a child I always drew," she says. "I sewed as well. I sought comfort and companionship in creativity."

She sewed doll clothes by hand and her mother taught her how to use a machine. Her grandmothers sewed as well. She still uses the same simple machine she was given at the age of 19. It goes forward and backward and does a zig zag.

"I am a basic person I keep it simple".

Five years after high school she attended Sheridan School of Crafts and Design where she studied surface design and textiles.

The world of fashion was not for her. She loved weaving which set her course for the next few decades. Every once in a while she would do tapestry off a loom, using pieces of paper and odd bits.

Weaving, making rugs, table runners, wall hangings soon bored her and she saw it as "doing basically production run works".

Although Derry was "creating (her) own designs and colours... everything became very geometric.... I knew what was coming off the loom and that is eventually what bored me."

The change came "when I took a course at Sir Sandford Fleming in expressive art therapy... and I think that turned a key."

It was at that time that she joined the Colborne Art Gallery. Art was no longer decorative for but a means to express herself.

And expressing herself means making statements about home.

"Home is important to me," Derry says. "It's my space. It's my retreat. I don't go away. I have always created environments in my home that I change around fairly often.

"I love homemaking. It's not wrong. I feel a little behind the times but I love keeping my home.

"I like cooking. I like to sew. If I could I would sew most of my clothes."

Derry describes her working process as meditative.

"I have collections of fabric. I will go through them and something will tweek — a frayed edge, a colour is all I need to go on," she says.

"My mind drifts. I used to be a process person (but) that just wore out. I didn't have a connection to it. I can't spew pieces out. I have an emotional connect to it."

As to how her show is received, she says, "I hope they feel some emotion, some memory.

"For a lot of people it's about memory, about a grandmother's house, for others it is something deeper."

The show, Openings, runs to Nov. 13 at the Colborne Art Gallery.

Also showing is The Many Faces of the Portrait, with works by Judith Kreps Hawkins and Jillian Roos Markowitz.

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