

Whitby artist Sue Miller lends creative vision to community project

Three-piece creation will be unveiled at mayor's fundraiser on March 25 before being displayed at town hall



Sue Millar Public Art Project

Jason Liebrechts / Metroland

WHITBY — Sue Miller, an award-winning Whitby artist, has been selected to create a public art project that will be installed at Whitby Town hall. Miller submitted a three-piece expression that evokes community pride and collaboration to the peer review committee, which included staff and board members from the Station Gallery and the volunteer planning committee for Mayor

Whitby This Week

By [Parvaneh Pessian](#) 

WHITBY — When Whitby artist Sue Miller sat down to come up with a visual representation of the pride she feels for her community, it turned out to be harder than she thought.

Despite living in the town for nearly 20 years, she admits she still had a lot of learning to do.

“Whitby, to me, is just such a great (town) — it has everything you need. It’s close enough to Toronto. It’s got all kinds of green space and the people are so friendly, but I had no idea about (its) past or any real history,” she said.

Last year, the town put a call out to artists to send in their ideas for a public art project in support of Mayor Don Mitchell’s annual fundraiser, A Night Out on the Town. Entries were to demonstrate and evoke community pride with a focus on public engagement and collaboration.

Miller’s piece, which was selected for the project, is composed of three parts that each reflect a different moment in time in Whitby’s downtown. The past and the present are depicted through two colourful oil paintings showing the same view of the street while the future component welcomes individual input from the community. To do so, the piece that reads *Imagine our future* will be created as a line drawing of the same street on a laminated print.

To come up with the idea, Miller said she drew from what knowledge she had about Whitby council's goals for the current term and also did a little digging.

"I knew that one of the objectives for the town was to improve the downtown core so I did a little research on the direction they wanted to take ... and then from there I moved over to the Whitby archives at the library and I just looked through their old photos."

One picture in particular — looking north on Brock Street with a view of some of the businesses in the area — caught her eye as the ideal image to transfer to a painting.

"It's just south of the Four Corners so it's looking straight up and you can see Van Belle's is there, and all the businesses lining either side," she said.

"This photo was taken in 1947 and there are so many things that are the same today. So that's kind of where my thinking was: to start in 1947 and compare it to where we are today, and then move forward to the future to get people to collaborate."

Miller's idea was chosen by a peer review committee that included staff and board members from the Station Gallery and the volunteering planning committee for the mayor's event.

"Sue's project adds a generous spirit to our community," said Olexander Wlasenko, curator at the Station Gallery.

"Her complex painting style combines elements of light, colour and form to create an exciting vision of civic pride."

The final creation will be unveiled during the mayor's fundraiser March 25 before it's installed at town hall.

"Taking a collaborative approach, Sue has captured downtown Whitby's rich history and opened up the possibilities of its future to the community," said Mayor Mitchell.

Miller added that she's excited for the opportunity to contribute to the project and enjoyed the challenge it presented.

"It was a good little learning adventure for me to look back and find out a little bit more about where I'm living."

