

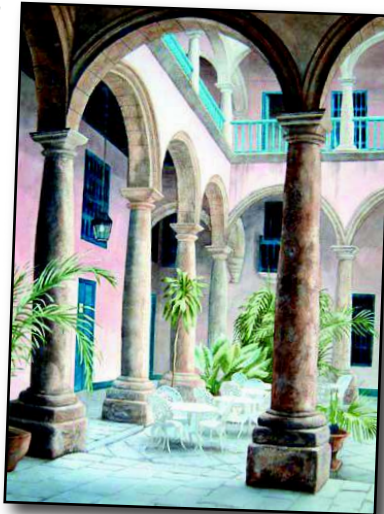
Playing With Colour

Local artist Karen Richardson captures the essence of Canadian landscapes through her award winning watercolours

You don't need to trek all over Canada to get a feel for its scenic views or its pristine natural wild-life. All you need to do is take a walk through Karen Richardson's home art studio. Suddenly, you'll feel as if you actually hiked along the rocks in Newfoundland or climbed the mountains in Saskatchewan or embraced the snowy blizzards in Algonquin Park.

Filled with breathtaking watercolour paintings of peaceful landscapes, vibrant foliage and stunning architecture, her studio will whisk you off to a remote world of tranquility and beauty.

This world is what Karen refers to as "natural paradise," and it has become the inspiration behind much of her work. "I am



constantly in an instinctive search for peaceful places," she explains. "I'm inspired by places that aren't visually busy and that have dramatic landscapes." Karen refers to her busy schedule and the hustle and bustle of everyday life as a means of justifying her passion for evoking solitude in her artwork. "Art, for me, is a retreat," she says, "and I think other people connect with that."

Karen jokes that you won't ever catch her painting raging storm waves. Rather you're likely to find her hard at work recreating what she identifies as "beautiful reflections" of nature. Her travels and



Karen Richardson is seen here in her Port Perry studio, and above, is Karen's painting "Cuban Rhythms," which was created after visiting Cuba in 2007.

her childhood growing up in a small village outside of Algonquin Park certainly instilled for Karen an undeniable attraction to the untainted state of the environment.

Her voice fills with both excitement and intrigue as she recalls her recent travels to the Yukon and the North West Territories. "It's called the Serengeti



Blushing Beauties painted in 2006

of the North," she says with a laugh, before raving about all the wildlife she and her husband, John, encountered. "Elk, Grizzly bears, they were all there!"

While Karen's art is greatly influenced by her childhood living up north and her thrilling explorations, her artistic flare is something she describes as "instinctive."

For as long as Karen can remember, she has been compelled to express her talents through all sorts of creative outlets. As a child, she says she was always "cutting and pasting, colouring and writing," and, as she grew into a young woman, she found a special solace in pottery, stained glass, wood working, cooking and gardening. More recently; however, Karen has also discovered a surprising sense of enjoyment in teaching.

"At first it was somewhat difficult to verbalize what was always instinctive," she explains, "but I've discovered that if a student has an inborn interest in art, then they have the patience to do whatever it takes to learn."

Over the course of the fall and winter, Karen offers three sessions (each session consists of six, three hour classes) of intermediate watercolour classes at Meta4 Gallery on Queen Street. Starting this fall, she will also be offering more intimate classes from her home studio.

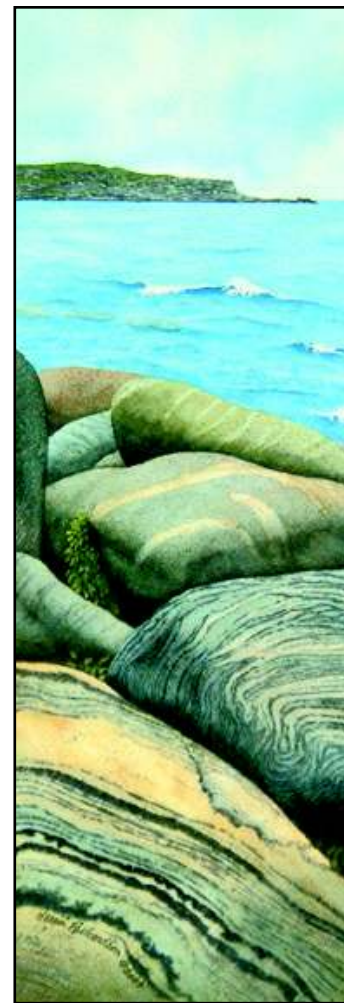
However, watercolour is not the only medium Karen specializes in. Perspective drawings of homes and unique architecture have made up of much of her commissioned work. Over her artistic career, Karen has commissioned over 100 customized art pieces for clients, with a focus primarily on estates, private homes, cottages, farms and commercial buildings.

Karen's architectural drawings have won her much acclaim. Not only was her watercolour painting "Cuban Rhythms" honoured with an Award of Excellence by the Town of Ajax and PineRidge Arts Council at their 9th Annual Juried Show, but she was also selected to produce custom paintings for many popular corporations.

She was granted the opportunity to create a watercolour depiction of the new campus at the University of Ontario Institute of Design, and has also custom paintings for Beatrice Foods, Ontario Casino Corp., and the Port Perry Community Memorial Hospital.

As Karen explains the drawing process, it's simply incredible to see how concise and intricate the detailing and measurements have to be to create a perspective illustration.

But such precise steps are what make the finished illustrations so captivating and unbelievably close to the look



Shipwreck Point painted in 2007

of a photograph. Karen works hand-in-hand with her clients to ensure her watercolour creations perfectly capture the personal element that initially drew the client to the space or landscape.

However, personal photographs are not the only options for clients interested in Karen's customized work. Karen says it's

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very common for clients to look through her travel photo albums and sketch books for inspiration and ideas and, sometimes, for an exact scene or object.

Karen also takes part in two spring and fall showcases, which allow her to display her creations and connect with other artists. The Lake Scugog Spring Studio Tour takes place in May, Showcase of the Arts will take place in November. As a member of the Scugog Council for the Arts, Karen works as editor of the SCA newsletter and she plays a key role in planning and co-ordinating the art show.

"I always look forward to the shows and tours because they allow the opportunity to connect with strangers and friends," says Karen, as she explains that painting is often considered a very solitary practice. "Feedback really is what reinforces the excitement in my art." She refers to what she describes as the best feeling in the world, "when someone looks at a picture and shows their enthusiasm and says 'Oh, I've been there, isn't it beautiful?'"

Karen's art creations have certainly connected with people. Since her start with watercolour in 1986, she has sold over 400 paintings in 19 different countries.

She continues to pursue an active lifestyle, including vigorous travels throughout Canada and overseas, to ensure her creations truly echo the exotic and vibrant feel of the natural world. She encourages those interested to book an appointment and tour her spectacular studio and gallery in her home in Port Perry.

For further information, visit her web site at: www.karenrichardson.ca or email mail to: karen.richardson@sympatico.ca.

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