

Setting up for Sooke's big fine art show



By Sooke News Mirror

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Alan Graves is a master at converting an ice arena into an art gallery, the hardest part of setting up the Sooke Fine Arts Show. It takes dozens of volunteers and hundreds of hours to achieve the look and feel of a gallery. And it happens beautifully every year.

Graves takes care of details. The large and small details from the layout of the panels for the exhibition's modular system to the lighting, laying out of the art work to the tiny tweaks to straighten a painting.

For the past five years Graves has been the designer for the Sooke Fine Arts Show. He sorts through hundreds of works of art, finding the perfect spot to display each and every one.

Each year is a little different and Graves said that this year they are consistently getting a number of art pieces that have the same esthetic.

He felt the digital jurying process worked out very well and he was able to get a preliminary view of the work. With that look at the work to be displayed he was quite surprised at the quality of the three-dimensional works.

"This year there are quite a number of new artists and a stronger representation of three-dimensional art. The quality is pretty consistent."

Graves does not do this all alone. Over the past five years the Sooke Fine Arts Show has developed a mentorship program, training local people in the art of exhibition design and display.

"Everyone is much more efficient and much more empowered," said Graves. Eight-five per cent of the hanging is done by the mentorship group. Graves just gives the final approval.

"From the front office to the people who sweep up the floor, there is a positive attitude. They serve lunch which is indicative of the care of the people," said Graves. "It's fairly unique."

Graves has two other experienced people helping with the grand scheme of things. David Saeger, from Metchosin, is a retired preparator from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, who is volunteering his time to help set up the show. He said he likes the variety and the challenge.

"The result is always spectacular," said Saeger.

The other man in charge is Robert Byers.

"Together they bring over 55 years of museum experience," said Graves.

The Sooke Fine Arts Show opens to the public on Saturday, July 28 and runs to Aug. 6. For more information on exhibition times and events go to: www.sookefinearts.com

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