

Re-defining what is beauty

Photos and Story by Sam Smith

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Weaving personal feelings into a journey of not only her own, but society's perception and expression of the physical being into a 15 piece art series is the latest in the ever-expanding body of work for Barbara Maye.

She is the latest to display her series of oil and acrylic paintings at the Studio Connexion in Nakusp in an event titled 'LLUNIO.' The Welsh word meaning "form, shape, fashion, concoct, fabricate, construct, figure, he/she/it may form/shape."

In the artist's statement she writes: "The meanings of the word indicates that one can be active or passive in both – one can see form or create form."

And that's exactly what her series is – beautiful paintings of different moments of a woman in different poses not generally considered "beautiful" by your typical magazine modelling ad.

Maye took a photorealistic approach to these paintings, but there is still a hint of an abstract style underneath the top layers.

"I started painting these abstracts 15 years ago but I stopped," Maye said. "I took them out again only five years ago, but I had to abandon them. But this last year I've rekindled with them and realized I wanted to finish it."

And it was just since the month of May that Barbara took up these paintings again and started working day in and day out. She says she would go over to dog-sit at a friend's place, and she would bring along a painting with her.

She would go to work, go home and start paint-

ing. Then do it all again the next week.

In this little amount of time she put in a lot of intense work, in which she produced paintings of not just a woman in poses, but select pieces of her body.

There are three smaller pieces featuring just the hands, three medium pieces of the jaw and chest, legs and back.

And while the majority of people were taken aback by two particular pieces – one featuring the woman in an overhead view of her knees, bent over and looking almost to be praying. The other which caught a lot of attention was the biggest piece in the set, which is the back of the woman heading off towards the left side of the painting.

"These paintings question what is beauty and what's considered beautiful," Maye said. "I think what's beautiful isn't the form of the body, but self acceptance."

Maye said her paintings, although they feature her image, are not about vanity in the slightest.

"It's about the opposite. It's about making peace inside," she said.

Even opening this gallery up to the public has been a struggle for Maye as she considers this series to be one of her most personal and exposing.

But with encouragement from Anne Beliveau, the curator for Studio Connexion, she was able to move past her own woes and put out a product that took her only eight weeks to paint, but 14 years to complete.

To see for yourself, head down to Studio Connexion between noon and 4 p.m., Wednesday to Sunday.



The largest in the series and one of the most eye-catching pieces. Maye has a total of 15 pieces at this art series at Studio Connexion in Nakusp.