

arts / arts notes

Diane Farris Gallery to close in April after serving the arts community for 28 years

by MICHELLE DA SILVA on MAR 2, 2011 at 1:14 PM

STORY



Elzbieta Krawecka's *Mighty Watch* will be part of the final exhibit at the Diane Farris Gallery, entitled *Coming Home*.

AFTER 28 YEARS of running one of Vancouver's most celebrated art galleries, owner Diane Farris is closing her eponymous space at the end of April. An expiring lease, more than two years of major neighbourhood construction, and the effects of the economic recession on the art industry amounted to good timing for Farris.

"It got to me that I was almost 70, I was working seven days a week, the economy's the pits, and I was in a position to retire, plus I could go on and do other things," Farris said in a phone interview with the *Georgia Straight*. "I gradually came to the conclusion that it would

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▶ be a beautiful thing to do."

Farris started her career in visual arts by opening a space in Gastown after having found that she naturally had a good eye for visual arts, particularly paintings. "I was just delighted when I found that when I was excited about something, it seemed to be good, and then I learned it was called having a good eye," Farris said. "When I would see things, my heart would just start to pound, and I'd just think, "Oh, I'm sure that's good." Over time, it would be proven that I did have an ability to do that."

It was not long before Farris quickly became known for nurturing the talents of young artists such as Angela Grossmann, Attila Richard Lukacs, and Graham Gilmore, and taking a particular interest in students emerging from what is now Emily Carr University of Art and Design. "Skulking around Emily Carr at night, I would suddenly stop dead in my tracks and discover a Jesse Garbe, and go, "Oh my god, who's that?" Farris said. "Certainly, the early artists, Attila and Angela, they were painting huge sloppy expressionist wonderful aggressive things, and it was just like nothing I had ever seen before, so it seemed like a whole new thing."

By the time she moved her gallery to its current South Granville location, Farris had also begun her involvement with many charitable organizations, including the W.I.S.H. Drop-In Centre and the B.C. Brain Injury Agency. Farris's gallery space also became a fundraising hotspot for other arts organizations such as the Vancouver Opera and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

With nearly 30 years as a gallery owner, Farris said that it's the proliferation of artists and the emergence of alternate art spaces, including events such as the Eastside Culture Crawl, that have really shifted the landscape of the visual-arts community. "I think a lot of artists are also representing themselves and that's a good thing," she said. "They do a good job of it, and some of them, because of the nature of their work, it's a better way for them to earn a living if there's huge expenses involved in making the work."

One thing that Farris is hoping to see changed is the amount of support that artists receive from the government. "I think people have to realize that if you look at the facts and figures, art is a very good thing," she said. "It was horrible when the government cut back on the arts funding from the lottery and things like that. It's just so upsetting because it's not just people standing in their studio painting, it's people who make the paints and supply the materials, and there's a lot of the economy that goes into making art."

The gallery's final exhibit features the Canadian landscape paintings of Elzbieta Krawecka, which opens tomorrow (March 3). Farris's successful online gallery, which was the first of its kind in the world when it launched in 1996, will remain open and continue to evolve.

"It's a changing world and I think online is a way that a lot of people are going to go," Farris said. "I was right in on it at the beginning, and I'd like to do something new and exciting again. The configuration of artists will change. I don't want to talk too much about some of the things we have in mind, but I'm excited."

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MAR 2, 2011 at 3:06 PM

Both the gallery and Diane will be missed on South Granville. We do agree her with the fact that, "it's a changing world ...online is a way that a lot of people are going to go."

3 5 Rating: -2

KMB

MAR 3, 2011 at 7:15 AM

Online is convenient but there is nothing like a chance encounter with a piece of art that stops you in your tracks and makes you forget to breathe for a minute.

Diane Farris Gallery will be greatly missed. I hope that the serious damage done to the BC arts community is not irreversible and that once Campbell and his friends are out of power, the next government will listen to and respect the wishes of the people in our province to encourage and support arts, artists and community organizations, to properly fund health care and education including arts education, and to increase our minimum wage so that working people no longer live in poverty. Enough with the casinos and lucrative contracts/ appointments to liberal friends and the selling off of our public assets to private interests.

The heart and soul of our cities and province lie within the artists - the painters and poets and photographers and sculptors and storytellers and dancers and musicians and crafters and builders and actors and designers and ceramicists and...

2 6 Rating: -4

Goldorak

MAR 4, 2011 at 11:55 AM

"One thing that Farris is hoping to see changed is the amount of support that artists receive from the government."

Crock! So Farris is closing her gallery because from her own account the effects of the economy made her business hardly profitable. Translation: less willing buyers, meaning people freely would not invest in the arts she sells now i.e. they might in the future but their choice is not now.

Yet she wants government's money for artists, i.e. that public money be funneled where people's free will decided not to spend money i.e. like it or not, you taxpayer will be forced to "buy" some art even if you wish not to part with your after tax dollars.

We already pay dearly so some gatekeepers in the arts can at will decide who they invite, who plays in their little garden or not, so the right guys get grants while the rest can simply shut up and pay is what's disgustingly preposterous in Farris and other arts circles rhetorics.

There are arts lovers and supporters that are fed up with this appropriation of public funds to a self serving few who always want more.

3 5 Rating: -2

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