

Impact Story:

Estevan Art Gallery + Museum

by
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Saskatchewan
Arts Alliance



"I think Canadians need Canadian art because Canadian art is the story of them," says Anderson.

Each month SAA posts an Art Works article highlighting an arts organization making a positive impact in its community. This Month Carle Steel highlights the Estevan Art Gallery and Museum, and how it is essential infrastructure for an isolated city, an oasis for artists and the public hungry for professional art that reflects Canada and all its complexity.

At the fall show at the Estevan Art Gallery, two new exhibitions examine the topic of mental health in very different ways. The first, *Nature and Other Terrible Things*, is a mythical exploration of the things that go bump in our heads by young Newfoundland artist Robyn Anderson. The other,

Hospital Hallway, is an installation by renowned artist Sarah Anne Johnson, speaks to the legacy of the Weyburn Hospital, just down the road.

Anderson's creatures – strange chimeras of our fears and dreams – stand eerily silent in an imaginary forest; Johnson's subject – a video representation of the artist's grandmother, who was sent to the mental hospital for post partum depression but ended up in a CIA experiment – writhes between the walls of a large installation set back in the main space in the gallery. Gallery director Amber Anderson says these works are emblematic of the quality and diversity of exhibitions that come to the

gallery. Johnson is a heavy hitter; Anderson is a former MFA student of the U of S. What they both bring is a story: of our inner demons and our dark corners, always with us, but often out of sight.

Ultimately, both tell the story of Canada.

"I think Canadians need Canadian art because Canadian art is the story of them," says Anderson. "Even if it's modernist work that's more about the media, it is still thinking of that media within the context of our country."

That context is even more important in this part of Canada. "We are both rural and remote.

Estevan Art Gallery & Museum

We can honestly say we're in the middle of nowhere."

A mere 10 kilometres from the US border, and 200 kilometers from the nearest big city gallery, the Estevan Art Gallery is an oasis – and a lifeline – to area artists and the public from all over south east Saskatchewan and the Midwestern United States.

It's not just artists who reap the benefits of having the Estevan Art Gallery in their corner. Throughout the year, the gallery works with the hospital, theatres, schools, the women's shelter, delivering classes, events and outreach programming. It is both a physical hub and a tangible force throughout the community, essential infrastructure to the city. Attendance numbers bear

witness to gallery's value to the community it serves. "You don't break attendance if you're not relevant," Anderson says. That number increases year after year, now outnumbering the population of Estevan. The gallery's guest book shows visitors from all over – from New York to Iowa, as far away as Peru. Like any big city gallery, it is where people come to see what's going on, and what people are talking about. "No one comes to visit a tax break," she says.

Anderson says that a professional staff is invaluable in providing specialized support to the gallery and its programs, and service to the community they love. "That's how we're getting those numbers, how we're getting **those shows**. **That's how we're getting people**

to realize it's a significant space, and we're so fortunate to have it."

For more information visit
estevanartgallery.org



Robyn Anderson, Nature and Other Terrible Things, 2015, installation view.