

The Inverness Oran

Uli Schaarschmidt: German artist shows recent Cape Breton works at ICCA Gallery -by John Gillis

German-born artist Uli Schaarschmidt, who's been spending a considerable amount of time recently in Cape Breton, attended the official opening of his show at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts on Sunday afternoon, June 3rd.

"From 1911 to 1914 Munich was the birthplace of the Blue Rider, a fellowship of Expressionist painters which included such esteemed pioneers of modern art as Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, August Macke and Paul Klee. They all shared a common desire to express spiritual truths through their art. Before Expressionism, art was made like this: the eye sees, the hand responds, the mind judges.

Expressionism changed the process to this: the mind sees, the hand judges, the eye responds. A new, inner-directed, transphysical modern art was born. It was not just spiritual; it was exciting. It excited the eye in a brand new way, and it continues to thrill and move the open-eyed viewer to this day," says Uli Schaarschmidt's friend and fellow artist, Onni Nordman.

While Nordman notes the Expressionist influences in his friend's work, Schaarschmidt is quick to point out that his style comes from a direct response to his subjects.

Anyone familiar with the Expressionist style of painting would know that many of the great masterpieces in this style are often angst-ridden works. Uli's works are brighter, however, and speak a more positive message. His subject matter for this show includes Native people, miners, fishing boats and harbours, flowers, landscapes and portraits in black and white and bright colour. Many of the works in the show incorporate hand-written text or quotes from Biblical or other personal sources. He often includes notes, sketches, or snapshot photographs to provide a wider context for the subject.

"I come from a big city, and I studied traditional painting and the great masters. We live in an age of computers, the Internet and information overload and the work you see here is a response to what I see here in Cape Breton," says Schaarschmidt.

"For me, the main thing is to glorify the Lord. Take strength, healing and excitement from my work with you. I came from another country, from another mother tongue, but Cape Bretoners gave me their hands and made me feel at home," he added.

The Uli Schaarschmidt show runs at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts until July.

While you're there check out the hallway gallery show of prints, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's Art Bank collection, which features works from a number of distinguished Canadian artists.