

# Highlander arts



Photo by Mark Arike

Minden artist Matthew Mancini admires nature in Haliburton's Head Lake Park.

## Young artist represents Canada at art show

By Mark Arike

Her Majesty the Queen didn't show, but for local artist Matthew Mancini, a trip to the U.K. as a representative of his country was satisfying enough.

"In terms of international exposure, it was definitely an opportunity for having more people look at your work in a very concentrated amount of time," said Mancini, a Minden resident who attended Art in Action 2012 in Waterperry, Oxfordshire between July 19 and 22.

"It was definitely a good opportunity for a lot of people to see my work all at once."

A traditional oil painter who moved to the Highlands with his wife Emma two years ago, Mancini recently shifted his focus from portrait work to landscapes.

"The area provides an opportunity for that [landscape painting]," he said.

Mancini ended up becoming a candidate for the show after a "friend of a friend" told organizers about him. He received an invitation and submitted a portfolio of his work.

"Being primarily a portrait artist, one of the responses I got from one of the organizers was that they wanted to see landscape [work]. I thought that was a perfect opportunity because I had been working so much on landscape."

He sent over 18 pieces for the show, ranging in size

from four by six inches to 14 by 10 inches. Each piece depicted landscape found in Haliburton County.

"Sending over a lot of smaller work is easier than sending larger works and fewer of them. It was a good way to show more of an array of work."

This year's event, which drew about 25,000 visitors and 400 artists, was special in that it celebrated the Queen's diamond jubilee (her 60<sup>th</sup> year as monarch). As a result, one artist from each of the Commonwealth countries was invited to attend.

At Art in Action, artists are encouraged to not only show their pieces but also demonstrate their craft.

"Onlookers get a chance to interact with the artists on more of an intimate basis," said Mancini, adding that anywhere between 20 and 50 artists would be situated under a tent at the outdoor event.

While there, he made sure to talk up the Highlands and point out that his work was inspired by the area.

"You always get the token Canadian coming up to you saying, 'do you know so and so in Toronto?' A few people had visited Muskoka and Algonquin Park, so they've heard of the area. It was really cool to meet fellow Canadians and people who have once lived in Canada."

Mancini was hoping that the Queen herself would stop by his booth. He patiently waited but she was a no-show.

"I was really hoping that she would sit down for a portrait... I'm sure she had more important matters to tend to."

As the only Canadian artist in attendance, Mancini was humbled by the experience.

"You're kind of put in the spotlight a little bit," he said. "So people are not only interested in me as an artist, but they get interested in Canada and Canadian art, which is really growing over there since their last Tom Thompson exhibition."

He flew over to the event on his own, but was later joined by his sister Vanessa.

"My sister flew over from Rome to join me for the last couple of days. She assisted with packing up and shipping art back, so that was a big help."

Mancini hasn't yet become too involved with the local arts scene. However, this fall he will join the faculty at the Haliburton School of the Arts.

"This coming fall I'm officially teaching in their colour and figure painting programs," he said. "Other than that, I don't really have any other connections yet. Most of my work has been put on hold for this one particular show. It kind of took a full year to create the amount of work necessary."