

Art in the Park Stratford opens call for artists

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

Art in the Park Stratford is once again calling for new artists for its upcoming season with hopes that an additional 20 artists can be added to its roster.

Applications are open from Jan 1 to March 15 and can be made online.

"We had 64 members last year and dropped down to 48 re-signed members on the books. The online application is available right now through artinthepark.ca and any applications that come in will be processed," said Bev Hewitt, Art in the Park juror convenor.

The exhibition takes place from mid-May through September and is a major part of the cultural landscape in the city. Membership offers artists access to not only the local market, but also the interna-

tional visitors Stratford attracts.

Application criteria is strict and can be found in detail on their website artintheparkstratford.ca. With each application the artist is required to submit six images representing their work in one of their chosen categories. Acceptable categories are clay, wood, leather/fabric art, photography, sculpture/carving/collage, glass, jewellery, painting/printmaking, and digital art (no AI). There are participation limits for each category and for the 2024 season, both wood and jewellery categories are full.

"There is a requirement that you can only have 10 per cent of membership in a category. So, for example, if there's 60 members, you can only have six in a group. However, that doesn't always work. We don't have anyone in pottery, but we have six in jewellery, so that's full, but

painting is unlimited," explained Hewitt.

Once completed applications with required payment are received, Hewitt will take each photo and create an anonymous file with the artist bio for the jurors to judge based on specific criteria. This way each image is judged on its own merit without knowing the name of the artist. The volunteer jurors are also anonymous to all involved with the exception of the convenor.

Successful candidates can expect to hear back early springtime and from there they will be included in Art in the Park Stratford's website and social media marketing. Each artist must commit to appearing at the exhibition a minimum of ten times during the season. There are just over 50 show days in the season.

"The executive will sign you in and sign you out. You have to be setup by 10 a.m.

and take down at 5 p.m. You can't pack up in the afternoon because it is slow," said Hewitt.

Once a member of Art in the Park Stratford, artists are automatically included in subsequent seasons as long as their membership status is current according to membership requirements. The jury process only applies to new artists.

Those that were unsuccessful and have been turned down will receive a helpful critique explaining why their work was denied, how it could be improved and sometimes they will be encouraged to try again after further development of their art.

"We don't want to reject them outright, we want to work with them. I have six applications already which is pretty good given we only opened the call Jan. 1," said Hewitt.

Stratford Winter Film Festival announces film lineup

LISA CHESTER

Times Correspondent

The inaugural lineup of the Stratford Winter Film Festival (SWFF) has been announced and promises to bring light to an otherwise dark time in February.

There are nine films, five venues, one pass to access it all. The event takes place Friday Feb 9 to Feb 11. Event space includes Grayson Mills, first and second floor, Factory 163, Revival House and Avondale Church. Little Prince Micro-Cinema will be doing some adjacent, "secret" stuff.

"We are planning something that we are keeping quiet, but it is something that is extremely interesting adjacent to our core film theatres that is on top of SWFF, so off-SWFF, kind of like off-Broadway," teased Craig Sangster, SWFF co-founder.

The films featured were curated collaboratively through sending out letters to people that have been helpful in the creation of the event, with great response.

"We sent a letter and said we are curating the films now and each film fits in the category of food, music or history; you tell us what would be super interesting for this festival in our inaugural year. We got all these responses back so part of what you'll see is derived from that. There's also things we thought were interesting and other people suggested," said Sangster.

They wanted a mix that was interesting enough but not what would be consumed on a regular basis. Some old, some new, but nothing too esoteric. Based on the theme of food, music and history, there is something for every taste and style.

"This is really about community, and getting out of our house, and something to do collectively," said Bruce MacInnis, SWFF co-founder.

"We think our films are super interesting, we've had a super response. Here's a lovely collection built by people who really care about the experience. It's the whole experience thing," adds Sangster.

The themes have been developed using both documentary style and feature films. They are intended to encompass things that everyone cares about. What they thought made sense for the festival is having very universal, not exclusionary, appeal.

In the music category, the organizers bring 'Mr. Jimmy', '32 Sounds' and 'Have you got it yet'

"These films have just been released, so for our first outing to have these, we have done well. They have been shortlisted (for awards)," said Lesley Marsh, third of the trio of co-founders. "We're really excited. We have a bit of a vibe to have something sort of exclusive."

In the food category is 'The Truffle Hunters', 'Otto-lenghi and the Cakes of Versailles' and 'Percy'. In the

history category is 'All is true', 'The Last Vermeer' and 'The End of Time.' Previews of each of the films can be viewed at stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca.

There will be intentional collaborations within local business relating to each of the films that will hopefully drive audience members into accommodations, restaurants and coffee shops while attending the festival. For example, Revival House will continue to serve while the festival is ongoing and through introductions to films, local opportunity to cross-promote will be enjoyed.

Passes are available for \$99 each and are valid for all nine films. They are available online at stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca and offers the choice of six different itineraries. Festival goers are encouraged to visit the site.

Volunteers are also sought for the event. They are actively seeking ten or twelve more volunteers to act as ushers, merch table, and greeters, for example. Those interested can contact info@stratfordwinterfilmfestival.ca.



(LESLIE MARSH PHOTO)

(L-R) Leslie Marsh, Craig Sangster and Bruce MacInnis are the trio bringing the new Stratford Winter Film Festival to Stratford.



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