

# A tour of North America in one artist's studio

Catherine E. Schissel inspired by getting her feet on the ground

BY DEREK DUNN

A studio tour from Catherine E. Schissel's walkout basement is a journey through landscapes from across Canada and into the U.S.

From her upbringing in the mossy B.C. interior, to dramatic seascapes in the Atlantic region, to a series on tulips at the recent Glebe Art in the Garden Tour, the Stittsville artist's door has been opened for decades to her interpretation of nature.

"As an artist, you notice things differently. How would I mix the colours for that cloud? You think differently. You look for pattern and rhythm and great composition," Schissel said. "Like an imbalance in my paintings. The tulips, you know, are a little past the perfect time.

"You have to be fearless and develop your own unique voice."

Is it an insurmountable challenge to produce landscapes while living in a rapidly growing urban community?

Schissel moved to Stittsville for the first time (of four) in the 1980s. Her husband took a job with the government and moved the family from a farm

CONTINUED OPPOSITE

Detail from *Ragged Ann and Friends*, part of a series on tulips in Ottawa by artist Catherine E. Schissel. It appeared in the recent Glebe Art in the Garden Tour. Schissel is a member of the Ottawa West Arts Association.

Photo provided



Photo provided

Catherine E. Schissel has several paintings in progress on any given day. She offers studio tours in her Stittsville home.

## FROM OPPOSITE PAGE

out West, where she would wake up in the middle of the night to paint while the kids slept. Today, her studio opens to a large backyard brimming with the natural world and backing onto a forested area. "It's great. We are very comfortable here," she said, noting the conveniences outweigh the familiarities of rural living. "You can make peacefulness wherever you are. You've got to give up something!"

Added to the urban challenge, the landscape artist doesn't accept commissions from photographs. She has to feel the place under her feet to paint it. That means plenty of travel.

"I feel privileged to have this ability to travel a lot. It feeds my soul and brings out the painting. Every road trip, the paints and brushes are in the car," she said. "I like to move and see new things. Never stop learning, whatever your passion is."

Schissel's work is in private and corporate collections across Canada, the U.S., and Europe. It has appeared in almost 20 shows and exhibits around Ottawa. She has also won a handful of awards from area art associations.

She is a member of the Ottawa West Arts Association, which offers rotating exhibitions of artworks inside the

"I don't let political things influence my artwork at all," she said. "I let it go. It's very important to me how I feel about everything going on, but I don't have to spread my feelings all over social media."

If she has a preachy message to share, it is simply to make time for your passion and never stop learning. An artist ought to experiment with different media. She works with oils, acrylics, pastels, pen and inks. Travel and testing her skills in novel spaces are also forms of learning.

However, life often contains certain inconsistencies. Her deep love for the area south of Revelstoke, B.C., where her mother's ashes are spread.

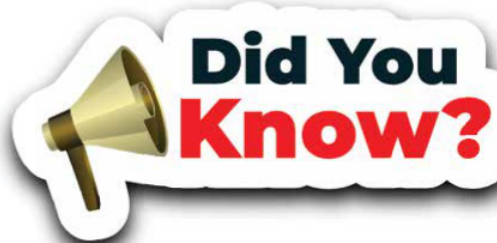
"My favourite is probably my Foshall series – a rugged area you can only get to by boat," she said. "How you are raised is how you feel in your environment."

Visit [ceschisselart.ca](http://ceschisselart.ca) for studio tour times and more on the artist.

CardelRec Complex on Shea Road.

Does her affection for the natural world, coupled with being raised by a conservationist father in a family that hunted and fished, provoke a duty to activism in a region experiencing urban sprawl?

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