



Metroland - York Division

## Vaughan artists hope to create a 'bang' with exhibition

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A group of Woodbridge natives hope to ignite an art scene in Vaughan.

Melissa Ciardullo, Nicole and Melissa Di Nardo, Joanna Katchutas, Katie Hawrysh and Christina Spina say it's not necessary to travel to Toronto for art shows when there are talented artists here.

The girls - who hail from The Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) and Ryerson University - organized their first group show, Bang, at the J.E.H. Thorsau MacDonald House in Thornhill from Nov. 4 to 7.

A stroll through the many rooms of the historic house revealed pieces as diverse as photography, a short film, plaster sculptures and paintings.

"We have never even heard of a group show like this being done in Vaughan or Woodbridge, where we are from," said Katie Hawrysh, whose seven-minute short film was one of the works on display.

"We wanted to bring art out of Toronto, so people here, who may not have access to get to the city, can come and check it out and maybe be inspired," Ms Hawrysh added.

The young talent admitted she has never sold any of her work, but she continues to create art for her own self-gratification.

For Melissa Di Nardo, her body of work captured her perspective of life in the many places around the world she has visited. From British Columbia and Mexico to Spain and Belize, her photographs are vibrant in colour and rich in culture.

"I like to see the unknown. I wish I had a secret power to take photographs with my eyes. Sometimes I just look to capture moments that just happen and then are gone forever, that's what I look for," Ms Di Nardo said.

Several of Ms Di Nardo's photographs are of her time in Mallorca, Spain. The 25-year-old spent nine months abroad capturing images of everyday life, including an ancient battle ritual that takes place annually in the Spanish island.

The images, titled Christiano's Await and Morro's Charge, portray an ancient battle dating back 1,000 years, when Moroccan pirates invaded the island of Mallorca.

"I have never experienced something like that before," said Ms Di Nardo, who captured the scene during the Festival of Pollençsa atop a nearby balcony.

"They charge each other, people get hurt and after the festival they bleach the streets. It is just mayhem," Ms Di Nardo said.

In another room, Joanna Katchutas's portraits are in great contrast to Ms Di Nardo's.

Ms Katchutas, focused more on self-portraiture and multiple sequences.

Her series, Multiple Clues, is a take on Hasbro's board game Clue. The six images feature each suspect separately.

Photographed with a tripod and a self-timer, Professor Plum, Miss Scarlet, Colonel Mustard, Mrs. Peacock, Mr. Green and Mrs. White are captured several times in varying positions, then superimposed on one single image in a frame.

"I thought of the Clue series and how the clues can be in different scenarios like when you are playing the game and it worked for that," said Ms Katchutas, referring to the 324 possible outcomes that can be achieved when playing the popular game.

Branching off from photography, Nicole Di Nardo, Melissa's younger sister, preferred the more traditional oil on canvas medium. The recent graduate's thesis work is on display, and she admits it is her favourite at the moment.

Nicole's Pre-Frontis Lobes Stimulus is a series of dark paintings that show close-up portraits of friends while they were using Skype - a software application that allows users to make voice calls over the Internet.

While studying in Italy recently, Nicole had asked for people to log onto Skype. She was immediately drawn to the faces people made while using the Internet.

"I was investigating the way our brains are changing because of over-stimulation from all these technologies," Nicole said.

"I asked people to go online and I noticed every time someone uses the Internet, they make a very zombie-like face. I wanted to know what was going on behind that face, in the brain, and what parts are being stimulated when using the Internet," the younger Di Nardo added.

Using predominantly synthetic light from the computer monitor itself, the work shows that the faces take on a wide-eyed and digitized look.

For more information on the artists, go to [www.bangvaughan.com](http://www.bangvaughan.com) .

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