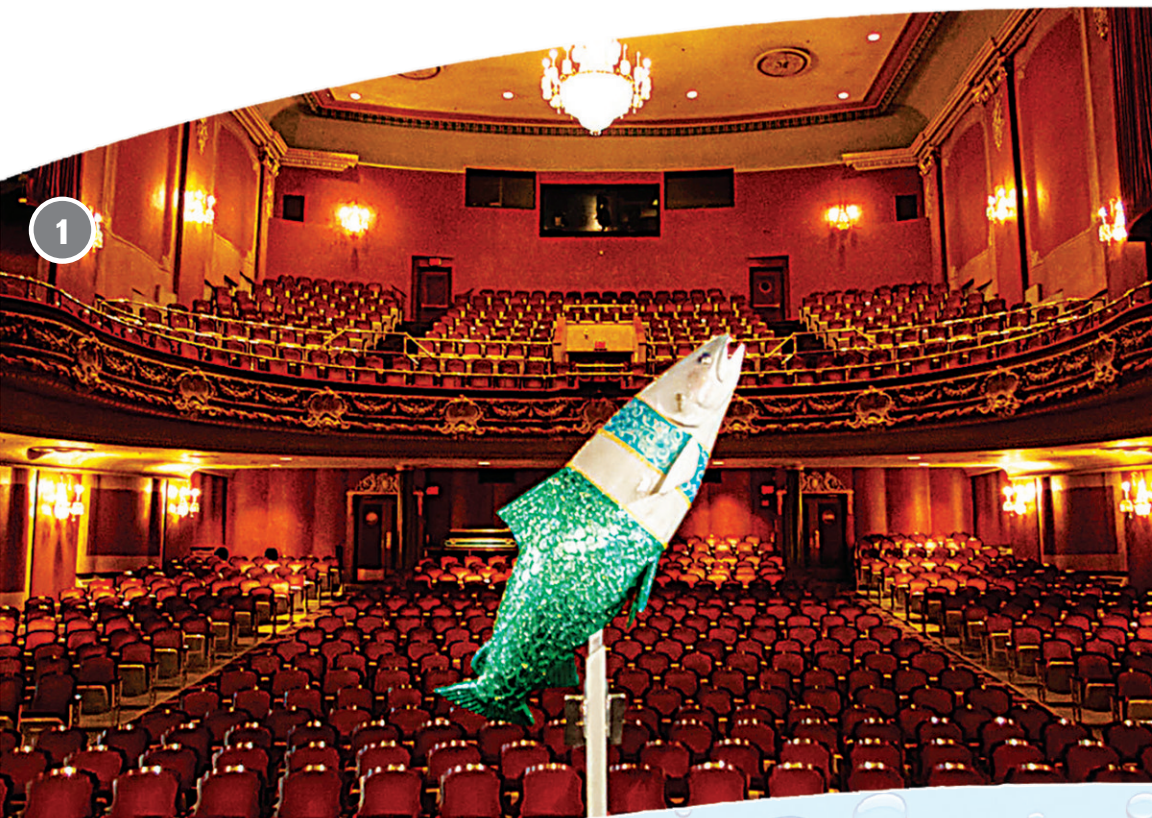


salon focus



Salmon sculpture season returns

The public art project that brought 'bold' sculptures to uptown Saint John is back for exhibits that can be 'seen and shared' by Robert Williams / Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • It's a cold winter day when Holly McKay finds herself waiting at the airport for a family from Syria to arrive.

In the moments of anticipation, McKay finds herself contemplating how an outsider is introduced to a new place.

As she looks around, she said one thing stands out: flags.

That realization would become the inspiration for a salmon sculpture she created for the Discover Saint John Salmon Run Public Art Collection, a "graphic" and "bold" depiction of the people of New Brunswick, and the flags that bind them together.

"My concept is probably one of the most important parts – if you have a good concept, you can kind of fill in the rest with imagery," McKay is a graphic designer by trade, but knows her way around a paint brush. After being selected as one of the seven artists for last year's public exhibition, McKay found herself with a three-dimensional canvas to work on.

"I had this in my living room for a week – this great big sculpture. So nobody could go in the living room while it was there. Normally, I have a flat canvas. So you really have to think about the wrap around and how everything works intricately together."

And now, with Discover Saint John launching version 2.0 of the exhibit, McKay is heading back to the well, successfully earning a chance to create a new sculpture, focusing on

the agriculture that makes up the New Brunswick countryside.

The Hudsons

It starts with a vision in her head. And then, Jean Hudson creates her salmon.

She's not a chef. It's not a matter of blending spices, and presenting the Atlantic delicacy on a dinner plate. Though, if she had to, it would likely be a beautiful presentation.

Hudson is an artist. And the salmon? A sculpture created as part of the city's public art exhibition.

In the first edition of the collection, an idea borne of the Canada 150 celebrations, both Jean and her husband Jack submitted their ideas for consideration.

Their proposals were so strong, Discover Saint John executive director Victoria Clarke said she had a decision to make.

"The quality of their submissions – 'which one are you going to say no to?'" So, she didn't. And both Jean and Jack were given the green light to create two separate works of art.

2.0

This year, with Clarke establishing a second instalment of the public art exhibit, the Hudsons are back at it.

From their house on the Richibucto River, the two work in their private workshop in the woods. On a given day, they could have

any number of projects on the go.

Now, it's back to salmon season.

"It's definitely not a competition," said Jean with a laugh as Jack gives her a look. "We kind of helped each other out. Jack is very precise and we compliment each other."

And this year's editions will display the differences in their process.

Jean's creation, named the "Chic Salmon," is pure white, and she said it has much more to do with texture than coloured-paint.

"The idea was to make my fish look like a fine piece of porcelain against the stone and busyness of the Saint John streets."

Jack's is quite the opposite. Called the "Dots A Lot Salmon," it is very "colourful, precise and busy."

"It is so thrilling. I am so excited," said Jean. "We walked down Germain Street and saw [one of my first sculptures] in The Chapman Group window and I was like, "Oh my goodness, that's mine!"

It's a strange feeling seeing your art work in public, said Jean. But it's a different experience when you see it in the hands of someone else.

"You put so much work into it. And you definitely feel like you're giving a piece of yourself away. But on the other hand, it is very thrilling to see that someone else likes it as much as I did."

McKay had a similar reaction. Her salmon was on display in the Saint John City Market last year, and she said she would drop in almost every other day and watch as locals and visitors reacted to her piece.

Creating an experience

In the build up to Canada 150, Clarke said they pitched various ideas to the provincial and federal government, one of which being a play on CowParade – an international public art exhibit featuring fiberglass cow sculptures decorated by local artists.

Her team considered the many different directions they could take their exhibit, ultimately deciding on salmon.

"The pillars for us at Discover Saint John are doing things that tell a story about Saint John that makes sense," said Clarke. "And our goal was to create something that was beautiful and exciting for locals and for visitors alike."

The works were publicly displayed in the city, before being auctioned off earlier this year. All proceeds went to the InterAction School of Performing Arts.

Reception was so strong, with Facebook and Instagram feeds filling with photos of the sculptures, that Clarke decided to launch another year of the salmon – version 2.0.

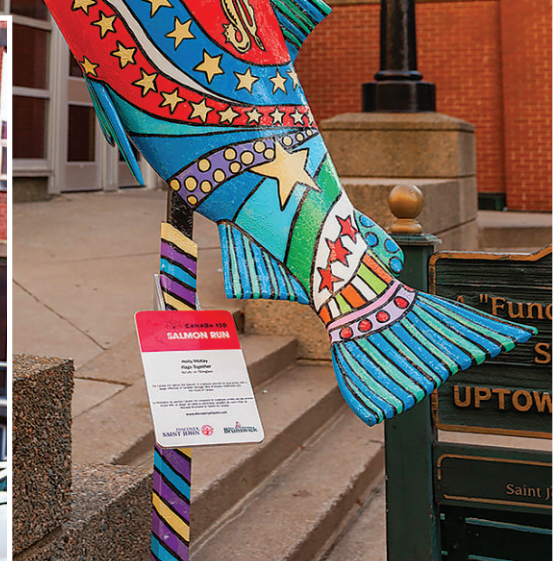
But this time, they won't be auctioned off.

The salmon will be displayed in the city during the summer months, and will be kept inside over the winter to maintain their appearance, while also respecting the work that needs to be done on the streets when snow becomes a factor.

For the artists, it means another chance to create something lasting, and to be enjoyed by the public for years to come.

"Art is something to be seen and shared," said McKay. "It really adds to the flavour of the city, so to be a part of that is such a big deal."

"This is the stuff people are taking pictures of and this is what they remember."



1. While last year's salmon were auctioned off, this year's will be kept inside over the winter and displayed again next year. **2.** The original Salmon Run project was created as a part of the Canada 150 celebrations. **3.** This salmon sat in Grannan Lane, near Rogue Coffee, last year. **4.** Works in the Salmon Run Public Art Collection in 2017 were auctioned off earlier this year. **5.** Reception to last year's Salmon Run project was strong, with pictures filling social media feeds. **6.** The goal of the original Salmon Run was to 'tell a story about Saint John that makes sense,' said Discover Saint John's Victoria Clarke. **7.** This salmon, covered in pennies, sat in front of Java Moose on Prince William St. last year. **8.** Last year, this salmon sat outside City Market. **9.** The Salmon sculpture project last year was intended to be 'beautiful and exciting for locals and for visitors alike,' said Clarke. **10.** Holly McKay's salmon sculpture is inspired by the bright designs of flags. **11.** Jack Hudson works on his 'Dots A Lot Salmon' for the Salmon Run 2.0 Public Art Collection. **12.** Salmon on display as part of the Salmon Run Public Art Collection in 2017. A second collection is in the works, to once again be displayed on the streets of Saint John.



PHOTOS: SUBMITTED/ DAN CULBERSON