

# For the love of the Canadian experience

Janice Ryan



Colour is good for the soul. It has the power to lift the spirit, stimulate the mind and stir the heart. After a long winter, the beauty of stark white has lost its appeal, so the timely opening of the West End Gallery's group exhibition this Valentine's weekend may help ease the winter blues.

For the Love of Art features the new works of four established Canadian artists — Rod Charlesworth, Claudette Castonguay, Josee Miller and Peter Wyse — all of whom clearly adore bright, bold palettes. Each artist brings a distinct style and all capture the essence of Canada by depicting the cultural experience or, in the case of Charlesworth, the landscape.

Travelling across the country from his home in Kelowna, B.C., Charles-

worth captures the grand diversity of the land, from the rugged beauty of the western terrain in *Autumn Sunset, Okanagan* to the changing leaves, a blaze of oranges and yellows, in *October Mood, Eastern Townships*. Short, broad brush strokes laden with oil paint give the work both depth and texture. His paintings are further energized with hints of pink and purple among the thick, green trees.

Castonguay has been sharing Quebecois style and elegance on canvas for more than 35 years. Gardens and markets abundant with flowers and sophisticated cocktail parties featuring well-attired guests offer a unique reflection of her world. "All of my paintings are inspired by imagination," she says. "When I begin a new painting, I take the time to allow for improvisation. I try to harmonize light, colour and forms."

Her paintings flow with dreamy hues of lilac, rose and aqua, evoking feelings of joy and love. In *The Musical Rendez-vous*, Castonguay imag-

*Group show's bright, bold colours help ease the winter blues*



SUPPLIED, WEST END GALLERY  
Peter Wyse's *Boy With a Big Heart* is a brilliantly hued tribute to the artist's six-year-old son.

ined a "rendezvous" on a terrace with beautiful flowers and classical music. "I think the summer season is a good time for playing music and drinking champagne with friends," she says.

Miller paints scenes from the French quarters of her home in Ste-Foy, Que. Using intense reds and blues with pops of green and yellow,

Miller captures the hustle and bustle of life and the atmosphere of everyday scenarios on a street corner or in the market. Her attention to architectural details adds another dimension to the work: quaint brick buildings adorned with awnings, shutters and a line of laundry drying outdoors; sidewalk cafes and cobblestone walkways; the stone bridge and tower in the background of skaters gliding along the ice in *Soleil d'hiver sur la patinoire*. Miller's paintings freeze-frame a moment in time, offering a European perspective that makes one want to hop a plane and head east.

Wyse's whimsical paintings reflect scenes from his home in the historic village of Clayburn, B.C.

"I've got a six-year-old son," Wyse says. "I look out the window at the back lane where the kids are always playing hockey or riding their bikes. This is my life."

His Canadiana themes are often nostalgic: groups of children skiing, skating or playing hockey; a young boy carrying a fishing rod and ac-

## VISUAL ARTS PREVIEW

### For the Love of Art group show

**Where:** West End Gallery, 12308 Jasper Ave.

**When:** Saturday through Feb. 25, Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

companied by a polar bear; and six white wolves bounding across the lime-coloured ground between conical-shaped evergreens.

Using a palette of about 10 colours, Wyse finds the simplest, most organic line to express his images. Applying layers of acrylic paint onto a board, he then wet-sands the surface "to expose the history of the painting," giving the work depth.

*Boy With a Big Heart*, a tribute to Wyse's son, shows a pint-sized boy embracing a huge scarlet heart.

"When you open the door to our gallery, you are going to be confronted by all this colour, getting a little bit of a respite from winter," says Matthew Hudon, West End Gallery's general manager.