

The Intelligencer

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Toast to the gods

Oeno, goddess of wine, finds new home

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It's all in the name.

Carlyn Moulton and Barbara Basille wanted a short, simple name for their gallery, but they also picked a prophetic one.

When in 2004 the pair was planning to open an art gallery, they selected the name Oeno (pronounced "EE-no"), the Greek goddess of wine.

The gallery, then in the partners' Old Orchard Road home east of Carrying Place, drew between 5,000 and 6,000 people a year.

But as of this month, the gallery has a new home – and the wine goddess would be pleased.

A new Oeno has been built five kilometres north of Bloomfield on Huff Estates, the winery, inn, and vineyard on County Road 1 (Schoharie Road) at Highway 62.

A grand opening is set for Jan. 30 from 3 p. m. to 7 p. m.

In an interview there Tuesday, Moulton said the home gallery concept was always a short-term plan.

"The commute was great before," she said with a laugh.

But in that first gallery, she said, there wasn't enough parking; stairs and a hill were at times a problem; and the location was somewhat remote.

She and Basille began talking with Lanny and Catherine Huff, owners of Huff Estates Winery and Inn north of Bloomfield.

Two years later, the new partnership is in place.

"It makes great sense," Moulton said of the move.

She said the gallery shows contemporary fine art, while the Huffs' wines also lean toward the bold and contemporary.

Now in its fifth year, Huff Estates has already produced award-winning wines at the national, provincial, and regional levels.

"Art and wine obviously go together, and with the inn, it's an ideal situation," Lanny Huff said.

"You need to create a destination. You need something to draw the people and hold the people so they stay around for a while.

"It helps the entire County because they don't drive down here just to go to our winery or our gallery. They do a whole tour."

Already, he said, his inn staff are taking calls from visitors "who want to stay at the inn specifically because they're going to the gallery."

"The co-marketing is very beneficial," gallery co-owner Barbara Basille agreed.

"We can bring our clients here and they can have a lovely lunch or a glass of wine."

The new gallery includes office space and storage and measures about 3,000 square feet – a slightly smaller but more efficient space than the first. It was designed by architect Keith Waglund with interior design by Jeffrey Douglas.

"This has a better flow," Moulton said, noting its moveable partitions and broader doorways and passageways.

"I'm quite excited about the fact we can create different looks and spaces depending on what type of show we're going to hang," Basille said. "It's more accessible to more people and we are able to hang large pieces and we can create smaller galleries and alcove galleries."

Moulton said the hope is to expand both foot traffic through the new building and sales to other clients.

The gallery also serves interior designers, and employs artist and consultant Nancy Zboch full-time in Toronto for the task.

At the first gallery, Moulton said, "Half of our business was with people who had never been to the gallery."

The new space also means new staff.

"Art and culture as a sector does create jobs," Moulton said.

Two Picton natives, Ronika Dayton and

Chrissy Poitras, earned their fine art degrees at Queen's University and have now returned to their home county to work as curatorial assistants.

Dayton handles marketing and other duties; Poitras works on publications, especially the art catalogues Oeno creates regularly. All staff work with visitors as needed.

Belleville native turned Prince Edward resident Charles Parsons covers logistics and installations, while Sylvia Botnick is the bookkeeper.

The display space is an open, high-ceilinged room with large windows on the west side and plenty of indirect natural light in the inner space.

A variety of creations – bright, dark, small, large, accessible and abstract – by more than 30 artists is on display through Feb. 25.

"We want to work with people who are showing in other countries, or other parts of Canada, at least," said Moulton.

"The art we have here is a reflection of what both Carlyn and I like," Basille said, adding not all of it is high-priced. "We try to choose quality pieces of art that are in a moderate range, so they're affordable for a lot of people."

Higher-priced art is also for sale, she said.

There is more to come: the next several shows are already planned, as are the Jan. 31 Winemaker's Dinner and Feb. 8 start of a free 12-part art lecture series.

More landscaping, including an Asian-style garden, will be created in the spring by Wellington's Drew MacCandlish, and new outdoor sculpture will be added.

But even during the winter, the gallery is open daily from 10 a. m. to 6 p. m.

"Come and visit and spend some time here," Basille said. "We'll explain to you what we have, and we'll help you choose a piece if that's what you're here for.

"We would like to have anybody coming here knowing what they're seeing is an original and high-quality piece of art, that if they're buying it, they're buying an investment."

COMING UP:

* Now until Feb. 25: Work by more than 30 artists.

* Jan. 30, 3-7 p. m.: Grand opening reception. At 4 p. m.: ribbon cutting with MPP Leona Dombrowsky, MP Daryl Kramp, Mayor Leo Finnegan, Prince Edward County Arts Council President Judy Kent, others.

* Jan. 31: Winemaker's dinner with Huff Estates winemaker Frederic Picard and Claramount Inn and Spa chef Michael Hoy. Info/tickets: Huff Estates, 1-866-484-4667.

* Starting Feb. 8: First of 12-part free weekly lecture series The Gift Exchange—

Exploring Ideas about Art and Creativity. Talks by artists and curators Sundays from 2-3 p. m.

* Feb. 28-April: Group show by about eight artists.

* May: Art by Otto Donald Rogers

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OENO GALLERY

2274 County Rd. 1

(Schoarie Rd.) at Highway 62, at Huff Estates north of Bloomfield

Open daily, 10 a. m.-6 p. m. 613-393-2216

oenogallery.com

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