

Paul Bigg Bh
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Show and tell for art's sake

Forget that starving artist stuff, this is business

There are four things fine artist Wendy Whitmore likes more than anything else in this world.

They are: words of praise from her father; the ring of the cash register; her husband; her art.

As for importance, she doesn't necessarily rank them in that order.

Wendy, 40, and working harder than she ever has before, is gearing up for the big event; a three-day show and sale of her watercolor paintings at Springbank Visual Arts Centre on Mississauga Rd.

Forget that starving artist stuff. This is business, even if the business is her pleasure.

As many as 40 of Wendy's most recent works will be on display this weekend. Cutting to the chase, it'll set you back anywhere from \$300 to \$2,000 to cart one home.

She's good; in fact, she's been known to argue, convincingly, that she is Mississauga's best artist. That alone should be enough to

spark interest in this weekend's exhibit, but there's more to it.

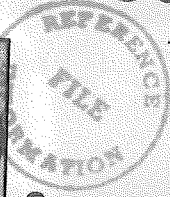
She's getting better all the time, as Paul McCartney once said. Whitmore is as passionate about achieving success as she is about producing fine paintings.

"They say you have to be either obsessed or crazy to be an artist, and I'm both," she said Wednesday afternoon. "People tell me how talented I am... and I really like that... but there's more to it, folks."

"There's a helluva lot of work and sacrifice involved. This work is hard on my eyes and hard on my mind, and it's hard on my back lugging all those heavy paintings around. It's tough standing humped over a table for eight hours or more, every day."

There are those four favorite things, though, that compel her.

"What keeps pushing me on — keeps driving me — is that someone will exchange their hard-earned cash for the painting I labored over



Gerry Timbers

to produce. It's the supreme compliment that they want to live with it."

If anyone ever came by their talent honestly, Wendy Whitmore did. Her father worked as a commercial artist for more than a half century, commuting by train daily from the family's Port Credit home to a Toronto studio.

Fortunately for his daughter, Jack liked to bring his work home.

But while she developed an interest in art by osmosis, Whitmore has worked diligently since gra-

even bother

developing and refining her professional skills.

"I can't exist on fresh air," she pointed out. "I'm selling more than I was even a year ago, but the final critic is the public."

"That's why so much hinges on three days this weekend. It's my final release. I need the input on what people like or don't like. I actually look forward to the criticism."

Whitmore is all too aware of how easy it is to get caught up in your own perspective. She admits, laughingly, that after spending more than a week of 12-hour days transplanting an image from her mind to a fine French paper, she can lose her objectivity.

"You go through so many stages while you are creating a painting, it's a real roller-coaster ride," she said. "When it's finally complete, you sometimes have trouble even

those uncertain times is when she turns to the mutual admiration society for focus, critical appraisal and moral support. Enter Dad.

"He likes to humor me, he's not too bad as a critic," she said.

Whitmore is versatile. She labels herself a contemporary realist. She paints everything, including figures, landscapes and wildlife. She is a thorough professional, who relies heavily on her research and draftsmanship skills almost as much as she does her natural creative abilities and experience.

"Hey, this is a tough way to make a living," she said. "And this is a business. I'm doing this to support myself. The bottom line is, though, I can't charge for an original work what it's really worth."

Now if that isn't a cue for the bargain-hunting, art-buying public to show up at Springbank on the weekend, I don't know what is.