

Pumphouse exhibit will brighten up your days and lighten your soul

Maria H. Klassen
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1 / 5 Artist Julie Forrester Clark's exhibition 'Cianalis' had its official opening reception on Sunday at the Niagara Pumphouse Art Centre. | Maria H. Klassen

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After the dull, dreary days of March, it was a delight to attend the reception for Julie Forrester Clark's solo exhibition on March 29 at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. The vibrant blues, yellows, pinks and oranges, found in Forrester Clark's work, brighten the day and lighten the soul of the viewer.

The title of the exhibition *Cianalas*, refers to the Scottish-Gaelic word meaning "a deep longing for a place" or "a strong feeling of belonging to a place". As she explains it, Forrester Clark has "suffered" from this longing her whole life, not realizing this feeling was a recognized condition. Having been born in Scotland, she has returned many times to visit.

Forrester Clark's work is inspired by Mother Nature, especially the wild weather and rugged coastlines of the Scottish Highlands and islands of Scotland's West Coast. Her paintings, however, do not depict specific places, but rather the feelings and memories of being there.

After a career in television news, she trained at the Rocky Mountain School of Photography in Montana. From there, she went on to learn encaustic art — an ancient painting technique — which involves heating beeswax mixed with damar (used as a varnish) and pigments. Her work has evolved, and she now explores with acrylics. She doesn't use an easel, but instead a flat canvas that she can move around and experiment with.

According to Forrester Clark, she works intuitively. There is no plan in place when she starts a new piece. She builds up layers with lots of textures. After experimenting, exploring, layering, scraping, sanding, and repeating the process over and over, the painting will tell her what it wants to be. Collage elements are hidden or added near the end to provide a narrative.

The current exhibition will run until April 26 in the Joyner Gallery at the Niagara Pumphouse Art Centre. Come in and be inspired, feel the wildness of the wind, the shape and scale of the mountains, and the deserted beaches.

The Niagara-based artist will be hosting an *Artist Playdate* on Saturday April 11 and 18, from 11:30 to 1:30. The Pumphouse is located at 247 Ricardo St.



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