

Reach-ing for Olympic artwork

Mayor chooses home for our new impressive, improvised painting

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The Olympic painting that Jessica Gorlicky crafted for the Olympic Torch Relay celebration in Abbotsford on Feb. 7 will hang on the walls of The Reach Gallery Museum, Mayor George Peary said yesterday.

Peary, who was presented with the artwork the night of the ceremony, also said that The Reach is making a bid to house both the painting and Abbotsford's Olympic cauldron, which he said would be a good way for the community to commemorate "an excellent few weeks in B.C."

The painting, which depicts a young woman with wavy black hair on a blue background with red and orange streaks to symbolize the burning of the Olympic flame on its history-making trek across Canada, holds special meaning for Gorlicky.



CREDIT: Jean Konda-Witte/Times

Ontario artist Jessica Gorlicky creates her impromptu Olympic painting at the torch celebration Feb. 7 at Rotary Stadium.

"To do a painting in 7.5 minutes, which is what this painting was, is awesome on its own," said Gorlicky.

"To do it in front of a crowd of sometimes five-, 10-, 15-thousand people is a total rush and to be an artist, to do something different - I'm usually used to working in a studio by myself - when it's done it's a major level of awesome satisfaction."

Although the Olympics and the torch relay were the ultimate inspiration behind this piece of artwork - along with about 45 other pieces Gorlicky created as the torch made its way across Canada - she said the overall experience is one of the greatest things to happen to the nation.

"I know it's made our country an even better place to live," she said.

"I've never seen so much joy and happiness brought to people that just weren't generally interested in what was going on.

"We were like the happy team. We were just there spreading the love and the joy of something that is a world connection.

"You feel very connected to each other, your country and it's a heart-warming and joyous event."

She added that the weeks of hard work and having to throw new ideas onto a canvass nearly every day for the past few months was "worth it" because "it was the happiest occasion that I've ever experienced."

Gorlicky, from Vaughan, Ont., said her experience in Abbotsford makes this city one of the more special places on her tour.

After finishing the first three-plus weeks of the nation-wide relay to Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba, Gorlicky took a month off.

She said she didn't know if she would come back to finish the relay, but was literally put into the spotlight when the torch hit Abbotsford on Feb. 7.

"I wasn't even supposed to perform in Abbotsford," she said.

"It was 'you're here, let's get you up there and let's do this.' It was last minute and I was totally freaked out and happy."

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