

# entertainment & arts

## Masse, Allen put spotlight on Whistler bears

Have you ever wondered what bears actually do, what they eat, how they play, etc.? Oh yes, of course, we know that they try to eat our garbage, we see them chomping on berries on the slopes and sometimes crossing our backyards. But, for many of us, our actual knowledge of bears is somewhat scant.

And, despite the sterling efforts of Michael Allen, fear and ignorance often combine to, sadly, destroy a bear's life well before its time.

What do a successful wildlife artist (Gloria Masse) and a renowned bear

researcher (Michael Allen) have in common? The answer is a great and abiding love and interest in bears — specifically our local Whistler bears. So, now we have an exciting partnership of Masse and Allen bringing their passion and knowledge to us by way of art.

Visitors to Art Junction @ Function over the years have become familiar with and have delighted in the art of Masse... her wonderful, expressive and awe-inspiring portraits of wolves and bears that are a highlight to any visit to this gallery. Now, visitors can enjoy portraits of our own local bears, Jeanie, Alice and Co.

"I had read many articles over the years about Michael and was very aware of his research and dedication and how with education and perseverance, people were learning how to coexist with some of Whistler's original residents. I realized that he would have photos of Whistler bears and I felt that by painting them, I could help with bear awareness," Masse said.

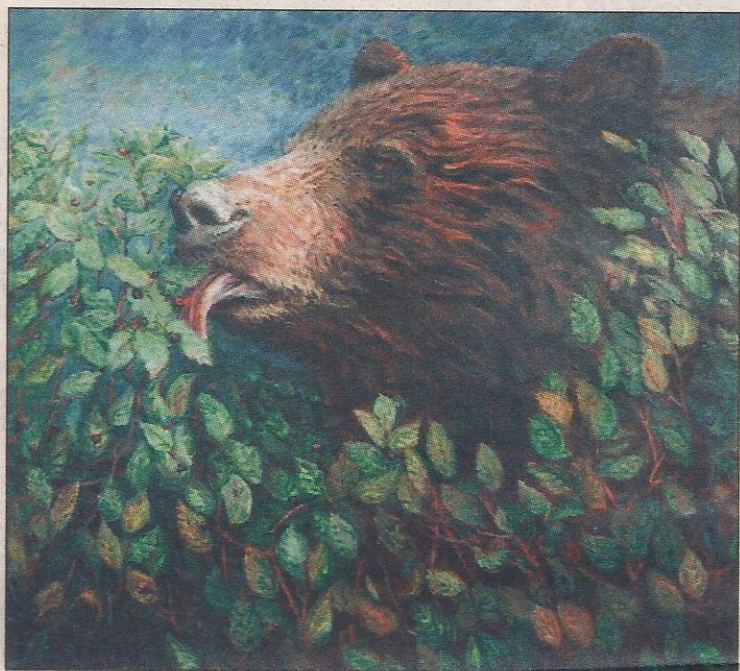
"Maybe if I painted the real bears of Whistler, people would be able to recognize the bears in their neighbourhoods.

"I don't want to just reproduce his photos," she said. "The paintings still have to be in my style. For instance, in one close-up of Alice's face, she is 100 per cent bear, but I have added the reflection of lupines making this particular painting a portrait of hope and spring."

This promises to be a long-time project as there are many bears to paint.

"It is my humble hope that people will be inspired by these portraits, that they will enjoy seeing them in their habitat eating, sleeping and playing and that they will feel a personal empathy with them," she said.

Masse is joining Allen on



Whistler Mountain this week for some up close and personal observations. She admits to finding the pace Allen sets as quite strenuous and challenging! "I live on Gambier Island where I walk a lot and thought I was pretty fit. Well..."

The redoubtable Allen is also excited about the project.

"I don't claim to know much about art, but I love Gloria's paintings and how she is able to portray the bears with all their individual characteristics. I love her attitude and her approach," he said. "We have such a special heritage here in Whistler, that anything to raise their profile is fabulous."

Allen has worked long and hard to encourage a positive attitude toward bears. He is encouraged by the amazing response he has experienced from the general public — more than 400 recent phone calls reporting sightings, asking questions and gaining knowledge of these unique animals.

And, if you need another reason to check out Masse's paintings, I should tell you that 10 per cent of any painting of Masse's sold from the gallery will be donated to Allen's research

This is just one compelling reason for a visit to Art Junction @ Function. The other being the grand re-opening of this gallery under the auspices of new owner, Harvey Lim, on Saturday, July 3, from 4 to 7 p.m. An extremely impressive roster of artists is scheduled to attend: Masse, Vicki English, Alex Fong, Hugh Kearney, Jean Lee, Ellen Mahon, Wayne Leidenfrost, Dieter Schlatter, Lorraine Surcouf and Gunter Wissmeyer. All

I can say is wow!

### ONGOING EVENTS...

Scott Johnston and Dave Petko continue to create interest and to definitely make some waves at MY Millennium Place.

Also, Barrie Chadwick has a super exhibition entitled "The Road to 2010" at the Newport Gallery in Squamish.

As well, the Viseye Photo Gallery should be on your "must-visit" list. Located in BBK's Pub in the Upper Village, the ongoing show entitled "Cold Passion" includes superb photographs by David Allarie, Guillaume Otis and Chris Rollett.

Also, the Whistler Village Art Gallery has undergone an exciting expansion in the Westin Resort and Spa. Check out their new space.

Finally, this weekend marks the beginning of the Whistler Arts Council's first annual ArtWalk. Keep your eyes skinned as there is so much to see and for any more information call (604) 935-8419 or log onto [www.whistlerartscouncil.com](http://www.whistlerartscouncil.com)

Happy Canada Day!



Top and left: Gloria Masse's Whistler Bear series. Above: The Whistler Village Art Gallery's new space in the Westin.



art works  
Judy Szabo

