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ARTS

Any way you slice it

Every year, the Enriched Bread Artists open their doors to the public.

And every year, there are some unexpected pleasures. Paul Gessell checks out this year's offerings.

John Barkley has gone electric blue. Audrey Churgin has become militaristic. Carl Stewart has found romance. These are three of the 21 artists operating from Ottawa's biggest art laboratory — the studios of the Enriched Bread Artists on Gladstone Street. If you thought you knew their work intimately, think again. They have some surprises in store for you.

Each year, the artists invite the public to tour their studios to see what experiments have consumed them in the previous 12 months. Sometimes, those experiments are successful and sometimes they are simply learning experiences best left off a résumé.

Whatever the case, literally thousands of art lovers troop through the Enriched Bread Artists studios every year for an open house spread over two fall weekends. This year, the festivities begin Thursday.

Here is what to expect:

John Barkley

He has become one of Ottawa's hottest painters. A large show of his semi-abstract landscapes last year at Galerie St. Laurent and Hill in the Byward Market was sold out moments after it opened. His latest works are more abstract. His palette has shifted from fall colours to electric blue, green and yellow. His themes revolve around the clash between the natural and industrial worlds. This guy is going places.

Audrey Churgin

This established and versatile Ottawa artist is exhibiting a series of pastel paintings on paper with a military theme. There are life-sized portraits of a French gendarme from the French embassy in Ottawa, cadets from West Point and students from Royal Military College. Last year, Churgin offered the world from the point of view of children. Today, very much in tune with the times, we peer into the psyche of the military man.

Carl Stewart

This daredevil produces work that occasionally even scandalizes some of his fellow artists. Remember the large wool tapestries last year of men doing you-know-what with men? Well, this year, the men are just kissing. But ever so passionately. The result is more romantic and, strangely, more explicit. Not for homophobes.

Ken Emig

Just a few days ago, this ever inventive sculptor was trying to find a name for his latest creation, a three-metre wide satellite dish covered in mirrored acrylic plastic. Because of its



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shape and reflective surfaces, sounds and sights are altered radically as you approach the object. It's an experience akin to falling down the rabbit hole. Definitely A+ for this one.

Eliza Griffiths

The reigning queen of the Ottawa art world was not on hand for a recent media tour. Probably working on one of her many out-of-Ottawa shows. Will some commercial gallery in Ottawa please give this lady a show? Why should the folks in Toronto, Vancouver, New York and London always have first crack at buying her paintings of aggressive young women?

Gayle Kells

This artist says her frank paintings of "full-figured" women are great conversation pieces but aren't big sellers. Fans tell Kells she is courageous to paint these women. But those fans don't put their money where their mouth is and evidently aren't courageous enough to put the paintings on their living room wall.

Marie Lugli

Last year, this artist gave us blue goats. This year it's IKEA

boxes with little secrets. When last spotted, Lugli was literally building a big surprise with hammer and nails. What was it? Let's just say you shouldn't be shy about opening strange doors in her studio.

Maureen Sandrock, Cindy Steimackovich

They're both into body parts. One clones hearts; the other embodies physical pain with lines of tiny beads. They don't work together. Maybe they should.

Tara Donaghy

She's into seemingly every medium going. Many explore sensuality. But check out the giant pinata. That's where she really scores.

The 9th annual Enriched Bread Artists open house and studio tour begin Thursday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and continue Friday evening at the same time and Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It all happens again the next Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Enriched Bread Artists building is located at 953 Gladstone Ave.



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Sculptor Ken Emig's latest creation, above, is a three-metre wide satellite dish covered in mirrored acrylic plastic. Because of its shape and reflective surfaces, sounds and sights are altered radically as you approach the object. Tara Donaghy's work often explores sensuality and appears in a variety of media. The giant pinata is one of her most interesting endeavours. Both are part of the Enriched Bread Artists group, which is holding an open house this weekend and next.