

## **Cultural Expressions Art Gallery Closes its Historic Doors**

**Ajax, Ontario, December 1, 2015** – A fixture in Ajax's historic Pickering Village since August 2007, Cultural Expressions Art Gallery will close its doors at the end of the year.

“My landlord has informed me that the building will be undergoing extensive renovations and I will need to close the gallery during that time,” says Esther Forde, Gallery owner and curator.

“At the moment I do not have a date when the renovations will start but during the renovations I plan to take some much needed rest to recoup, and come up with a new business plan incorporating some new ideas to make the Gallery more sustainable.”

Cultural Expressions is the only commercial gallery in Ajax/Pickering and the only culturally focused gallery in Durham. Looking ahead, Forde anticipates that while the Gallery will not have a physical home, it will continue to be in operation, perhaps online. Forde, who is well known in the arts sector in Durham Region, will maintain her involvement with the arts and in local community activities.

“The Gallery has been my passion,” says Forde. “It was established primarily to showcase the art of local artists from Canada's diverse ethnic and cultural communities, as well as international artists. The Gallery has highlighted these artists with special presentations both in the gallery and in public spaces, like our libraries, town halls and schools. The Gallery is a vital contributor to making arts and culture accessible to residents of Durham Region and has earned the ready support of local government, civic and business leaders who attend our special functions and openings.”

“We have exhibited the works of over 130 artists and receive weekly requests from new artists who would like to showcase their work at the Gallery. The Gallery has been a stepping stone for them to get their work into other galleries. It has also been a source of inspiration; sometimes

artists come in just to look around and see what other artists are doing. They are always very supportive and have been equally appreciative.”

Cultural Expressions has been recognized by the Town of Ajax and received the Town’s Volunteer Recognition Award for “Arts & Culture Community.”

“We were the only gallery in the area to showcase the prestigious Greenbelt Exhibition which was on tour across Ontario, appearing at the Art Gallery of Ontario just prior to opening at Cultural Expressions. We have welcomed local high schools to tour the facility to see the various art forms and techniques. And we help aspiring young student artists who love the arts by offering hands-on work experience and training through co-op placements.”

“This has been a wonderful and fulfilling experience,” says Forde. “I would like to call it an adventure that I wouldn’t have missed for the world. I have met some amazing people, learned a lot and have grown personally. I thank everyone who has contributed in one way or another to the Gallery over the years.”

The Gallery is located at 62 Old Kingston Rd., in Pickering Village.