

## Aidan Michael – *Chromatic Expressions*

### Visual Description

This exhibit is of portraits in acrylic and oil on canvas. I will describe 6 of the works. They are arranged one or two to a panel on the large, freestanding gallery panels. There are four double sided panels, covered with a beige carpet-like material, stacked in a line, running north-south. The panel faces also point north-south. The panels are numbered 1 through 8, with 1 being the northernmost panel, 2 being the south facing panel on the rear side of panel 1, and so on, through panel 8 being the southernmost panel. The artist has not hung anything on panel 8 (the final panel in the space).

Aidan notes, "*Chromatic Expressions* is an art collection that captures the complexities of human emotion through color. Each piece blends a vibrant palette of hues to convey a different feeling— from the fiery passion of red to the calming tranquility of blue. The art pieces are a visual representation of how emotions can be both fluid and dynamic, with the artist's deft brushstrokes mirroring a range of human emotions. The collection is a reflection of how art can be used to express the richness, depth, and diversity of the human experience. It reflects the vibrant and diverse range of emotions that can be conveyed through the use of color, while also implying a sense of movement and fluidity."

Aidan Michael is an artist with Irish roots who immigrated to Canada as a young adult. Aidan's unique perspective on the world is deeply informed by his LGBTQ identity, his background in architecture, love for sports and human connection. His artistic style is an eclectic fusion of abstract and impressionism elements that reflect his love of people, structure and his appreciation for the beauty of simplicity.

Aidan's passion for exploring the intersections of art, architecture and people is evident in his work, which often showcases the intricate interplay between light, space, and form. His art is a celebration of individuality, diversity, and the multifaceted nature of the human experience.

He has a remarkable proficiency and powerful intuitive approach to creativity. Using oil paint mixed with acrylic under paint he achieves palpable textures and moods with every confident brush stroke. His versatility in subjects is a tribute to his keen observation skill and lived experiences.

Aidan's exhibitions include collaborative shows with the New Westminster Artists Organization, most recently at Columbia Square and Arrieta Studio Gallery, and now this solo show at the New Westminster Public Library.

#### **Panel 1 – Fundamentals (12"x16.5", oil on canvas) and Immersed (12"x16.5", oil on canvas)**

These two paintings are hung side by side on this panel. Although they are different subject matters, colours, situations etc., they both feature the same pose, giving the pairing a logic. *Fundamentals* centres a brown teddy bear with white tummy muzzle, hands and feet, placed with right arm and both legs outstretched toward the viewer. The right paw has a red heart symbol in the middle of it, and the rear paws have stylized paw-prints in black. Beside the teddy is a completed Rubix Cube and a few Lego bricks. But the main subject of the painting is behind and slightly to the right of the bear, a seated figure with its back to the viewer. The person is angled slightly so we can see both the back and the right side, and their head is mostly out of the top frame of the picture. They are seated on a stack of books (with titles like Drag and RPDR) and are resting their elbows on their knees. They are reading a picture book in which we can see the simple pictures of a woman in a pink dress, a tree and a sky scape. The person is dressed in a yellow hoodie and blue jeans, and we can see some red and white striped socks, black shoes, and a striped tshirt peeking out from the back of the hoodie at the waist. The clothes show some contours of the body underneath and also illumination of the figure with different shading and highlighting. The background of the painting is textured brush strokes – white with pale blue and yellow on the walls and tan with dark grey and purple on the floor.

*Immersed* has a figure with the same placement in the picture – back toward the viewer, back and right side visible, sitting with elbows on knees and reading a book. However, in this picture, the figure is in the bathtub. This person has their head in the frame so we can see their skin and their black hair. The skin and bone structure has some beautiful shading and highlighting with visible brush strokes. Their right shoulder is brighter and highlighted in the painting. The water that reaches to their waist is dark blue with some light blue/white around the edges of the tub and where the water touches their body. The tiles around the tub are square and provide strong diagonal and vertical lines to the upper left corner of the painting. There is a small bar of pink soap on the furthest visible corner of the bathtub.

### **Panel 3 – Burdened (11”x15”, oil on canvas) and Him (11”x15”, oil on canvas)**

These two paintings are also hung side by side on one panel. The painting on the left, *Burdened*, shows a figure in cropped blue pants and a white tank top, sitting on a red chair. The figure rests forward, elbows on knees, and is facing to the left of the painting, slightly offset in the frame. The person’s voluminous and spiky black hair draws considerable attention, and the graphic paint brush strokes that outline his skin in a wide variety of skin-tone colours show the depth of shading and highlighting. The background is textured and features a few bright yellow highlights, and, as with many of the figures in this show, there are points (in this case around the hair) where the subject starts to blend into the background. The expression on the face is concentrated but enigmatic, the mouth in a straight line, and eyes concentrated on a point beyond the frame. The person also holds a phone in his hand, though he is not looking at it.

The other picture mounted on the right hand side of this panel is called *Him*. In it, we see the head and upper torso of a person, rendered in strong graphic undertones. The skin and hair of the person is painted in shades of grey, blue and black, and he is wearing a red tank top. He is in semi-profile, looking toward the left of the frame. His hair is black, and is a combination of short at the back and spiky or lifted at the front. He wears sunglasses which obscure his eyes and his strong mouth and nose are accented by a moustache and goatee. Strong light and dark areas on the face show deft shading and highlighting, and accentuate the bone structure and musculature visible under the tank top. The strong red of the shirt balances the heaviness of the dark hair. The overall impression is of a strong person at rest.

### **Panel 5 – Vinok (11”x15”, oil on canvas)**

This portrait is different from the others in the exhibit. It is a much closer view and the subject is facing straight toward the viewer. The face is treated in a more expressionistic way, with the facial features somewhat distorted or blurred into the surrounding facial areas, some unusual colour highlights (bright red near the eyes and along the nose, deep blue for shadows), and very visible, large brushstrokes with a strong vertical feel. Across the forehead, just above the eyebrows, is a line of alternating pale blue and yellow blocks of colour, which almost look like a crown of flowers. The expressionistic treatment in this painting almost looks layered atop a more realistic portrait, with the eyes, though altered, showing some glimpses of more realistic detail and visual expression. The mouth in this portrait is especially expressive with its deep red colour and downturned edges. The top line is blurred into the rest of the face, but detail remains at the corners.

### **Panel 7 – Fired My Therapist (13”x16”, oil on canvas)**

This painting is hung on the left side of the panel, with another one to its right. This scene shows a living room with an area rug in white with blue chevron print with the front corner turned over, an armchair in the centre of the scene, and a couch with some throw cushions visible in the top left corner. Beside the armchair is a small round side table with a brown bottle, and a smoking cigarette in an ashtray. Above the couch is a small bookshelf mounted on the wall, and a goat or cow skull mounted on the wall. In the

right corner of the room is a large potted plant. At the centre top of the frame is a double doorway leading into the kitchen, which is darker than the living room. We can see a window and kitchen counter with stools and a tap, as well as a kitchen table, and a door to the outdoors. But what catches our eye the most is the figure in the scene. Face down on the carpet, with feet splayed out toward the viewer, the figure reaches from the centre of the image over to the mid-left. The shoes look large and the body oddly foreshortened due to perspective. We can't see the head as the shoulders are hunched up blocking the view, but the arms are bent with the hands near where the head would be. Given the title, it is both a humorous image and a deeply lonely and sad one.