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■ ART: Couple opens cultural centre in Yarker

A dream come true

GREG BURLIUK
The Whig-Standard

There's a cafe and a variety store in the village of Yarker but that was it until Andrzej Maciejewski and Anna Szczepanec moved into town and started The Out In The Sticks Cultural Centre.

Now there's a film club, a book club and art exhibitions with lots more planned.

Photographer Maciejewski had lived in nearby Moscow for 12 years until he was joined by Szczepanec, a poet, two years ago and the decision was made to start the centre.

"When I was in Poland, I lived in Krakow where I saw enough theatre and art galleries," says Szczepanec. "I thought it would be great to have something like that here in Yarker, which is a wonderful place."

Maciejewski had been a commercial photographer in Toronto when he immigrated to Canada in 1985 before moving to the Moscow area in the '90s.

"It's been my dream for many years to have a gallery," he says.

While still being under construction, the centre started things off with a film club in February.

"These are mostly European films that are not in the mainstream," says Szczepanec. "We show them every two weeks and we started by showing them in our living room."

There is also a reading club run with the Yarker library. And in August, the centre had its first art exhibition, a collection of Egyptian paintings by Yarker artist David Pickering. There are plans to have some 10 exhibitions a year as well as short periods of artists in residence.

Today, however, the centre is having its first big blowout. Weather Report, an exhibition of photographs by Maciejewski, is being launched and, in conjunction with that the Phantasmagoria Art Festival, takes place from noon to midnight. The festival will feature both day-time and night-time art installations, video art and

Essentials

What: Out In The Sticks Cultural Centre is offering art exhibitions and other activities.

Where: The Centre is located at 2838 Country Road 6, in the village of Yarker.

What's up: Weather Report, an exhibition of photographs by Centre co-founder Andrzej Maciejewski starts today and runs until October 10, and in connection with that, the Phantasmagoria Art Festival will take place.

More: For more information contact the centre at office@outinthesticks.ca or call 613-877-4532.

Phantasmagoria Art Festival schedule

Noon-8 p.m.: Art Installations: This is a Doll's Life by Lilly Bee of Yarker and Plenty by Nobody Important, plus a walk-in camera obscura demonstration.

1 p.m.-4 p.m.: Video art by Yuval Yairi of Israel, *Random Stitches*, a film by Andrzej Maciejewski, videos by James Greatrex of Moscow, Ont., and short videos by Stefan Riebel of Germany.

3:30-10 p.m.: Live music by Barry Lovegrove of Tamworth, Tim Sheffield of Napanee, Ingrid Gatin of Winnipeg and Culture Reject of Toronto.

4 p.m.: Being Everywhere by Stefan Riebel of Germany.

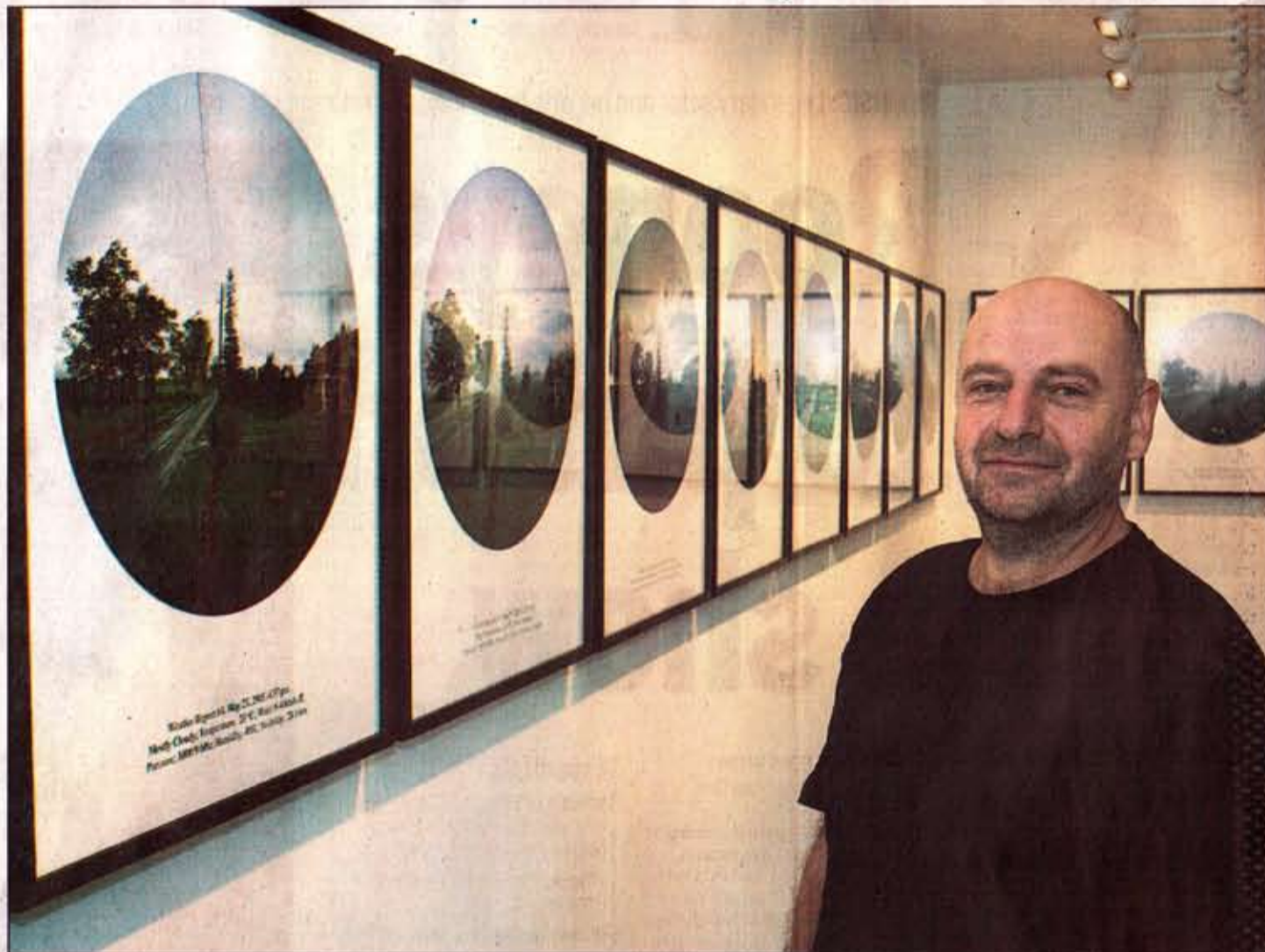
5-7 p.m.: Opening reception of for photo exhibition of Weather Report by Andrzej Maciejewski, plus sculpture by Henry Saxe of Tamworth.

10 p.m.: Nighttime art installations by James Greatrex, Bonnie Lane of Australia and Andrzej Maciejewski.

live music, as well as a reception for Weather Report.

An online dictionary defines phantasmagoria as, "a shifting medley of real or imagined figures, as in a dream," but Maciejewski points out "in the 18th and 19th century, it was a spooky light and sound event. We had more planned for this, but the grant money didn't come through. We'll do more in the future."

As for Weather Report, it's a fascinating study of the same image, outside Maciejewski's former house on Old Swamp Road,



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Andrzej Maciejewski with some of his work in the Out In The Sticks Cultural Centre in Yarker.

but taken at different times and periods of the year. The 36 photographs were taken between May 2003 and 2004 with a home-made camera obscura. It's a primitive camera with not much more than a lens, a shutter and a large dark enclosed space, which allowed Maciejewski to stay in it for hours when doing the lengthy three-hour exposures needed for night shots. The camera obscura wasn't moved during the year so that all the pictures would be of the exact same image.

The photographs are all oval because "what you are seeing is the whole coverage of the lens," says the photographer. "It's fascinating to see how much the image changes depending on the time of day or the season. And what was great in this case was that the horizon was in the middle of the image."

Maciejewski teaches how a camera obscura works in the schools, and is offering a special workshop on it until Oct. 3.

The couple would like to make the centre a true community centre.

"If someone wanted to start a chess club, we would be happy to host it," says Maciejewski. "It wouldn't have to be arts related."

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Anna Szczepanec joined Andrzej Maciejewski two years ago and started the Out In The Sticks Cultural Centre, which offers art exhibitions and other activities.