

news



Saint John potter Shannon Merrifield shows off a piece of her work to U.S. businesswoman Martha Stewart at the Buckland Merrifield Gallery.
 Photo: Courtesy of Victoria Clarke

Martha Stewart praises N.B. artwork in blog

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Barbara Simpson | Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • When Shannon Merrifield checked her email, she received the notification of a lifetime last week.

Her Saint John art gallery had landed an unexpected spot on the personal blog of Martha Stewart. In a post filled with photos, the U.S. lifestyle guru praised the Buckland Merrifield Gallery for its “pretty pottery pieces” and “whimsical” clay figurines she saw during a recent visit.

“We were over the moon,” Merrifield said of the blog posted June 28.

Only a week earlier, Stewart had come to the uptown Saint John gallery for a reception after speaking at the World Cannabis Congress. She went on a personal tour of the gallery led by Merrifield who filled her in on the work of New Brunswick artists and artisans.

“As someone who has that amount of experience and has seen many, many things, (Stewart) was incredibly impressed with the art we had in the gallery,” Merrifield recalled. “It’s kudos to our fine artists and craftspeople.”

Whether Stewart will make these artists’ household names has yet to be seen, but her blog post – called Attending the World Cannabis Congress – has been circulating on social media much to the excitement of Saint John ambassadors.

Stewart, who rose to fame in the 1990s on her self-named TV show, has 3.7 million followers on her personal Twitter account. Her magazine Martha Stewart Living has a total circulation of more than nine million copies, offering recipes, craft ideas and home decor tips in its monthly editions.

“The Martha Stewart Living seal is really lifestyle on steroids,” said Victoria Clarke, executive director of Discover Saint John. “She is the stamp on what is good quality, what you must do, what you must eat, where you must go.”

Through her blog post, Stewart will expose millions of her followers to Saint John and its facilities, according to Clarke. By name, Stewart mentions in her post the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre, Buckland Merrifield Gallery, and woodworker Peter Kinsella.

“You absolutely can’t put a price tag on that,” Clarke said. “Neither the [Saint John] Trade and Convention Centre or the Buckland Merrifield Gallery nor ourselves or the artists would be able to afford that kind of coverage.”

Organizers of the World Cannabis Congress, including Derek Riedle, however, weren’t expecting Stewart to take to her blog on behalf of Saint John and New Brunswick.

“Martha was very taken not just by the city – the architecture and the people – but the quality of event we put on and the type of environment the Buckland Merrifield Gallery provided for us,” said Riedle. “She was genuinely enthralled.”

Saint John Mayor Don Darling said the blog post should lift the spirits of Saint Johners.

“When you’ve got folks like Chelsea Handler and Martha Stewart coming to our city ... and then shouting out what a great experience they had ... you can’t buy that kind of exposure,” he said.

“These are folks that are admired and followed around the globe and when they write a blog post, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people will pay attention.”

In the past, Clarke said Saint John-area businesses have benefited from international media exposure. Taste of Egypt, for example, saw new business drummed up from a feature in the Sunday New

York Times.

“People were coming in that read the New York Times with the clipping to say to (owners Paula and Ehab Radwan), ‘We came because the New York Times told us to,’” Clarke recalled.

Merrifield says she hasn’t made a sale based on Stewart’s blog post – yet.

“I imagine one day down the road there will be a connection somewhere because her reach is in the millions.”



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Raymond_Bungay_ 17 hours ago

Awesome. The cost of buying advertising like this would way out of reach of most if not all small galleries. Congratulations folks!

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