

Havelock opens up The Secret Garden

By [Elizabeth McSheffrey](#), Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune
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Edmonton photographer Jon Havelock sets up his new exhibit at the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie.
Elizabeth McSheffrey/Daily Herald-Tribune

Jon Havelock has always been interested in photography.

As a teenager, he remembers playing around with film cameras before sidelining the hobby for a career in politics.

He went to university, raised a family, and from 1993 to 2001, he served as a provincial MLA for Calgary-Shaw.

Havelock served as Minister of Justice and Economic Development under the late former premier Ralph Klein, but retired from the legislature in 2001 to pursue his interests in art.

It's not exactly a natural progression, he admitted, but it's a change he has never looked back on.

"I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be out of politics," he said. "It was stimulating and challenging, but every day you're faced with new problems..."

"For me, this is absolutely more rewarding, more fulfilling."

Havelock has been a professional photographer for more than seven years and specializes in images of nature and scenery.

He opened his first exhibit at the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie on Thursday – a 20-piece display called, The Secret Garden.

“When I’m working my images, I always look for contrast, I look for colour,” he explained. “But these are scenes you can drive by and quite frankly, not notice.”

Havelock travelled across Western Canada and the United States to compile the series, which features a variety of plants from British Columbia to Hawaii.

He digitally altered their textures and colours to bring out the tone, depth and light often seen in an oil painting.

His vision is to “highlight the extraordinary that is inherent in the ordinary,” using enhanced imagery to heighten appreciation and awareness of the environment.

“I’m trying to have people realize that they have this fantastic beauty around them, so stop and smell the roses,” he explained.

“They can look at a field, but if they look at what I’ve done with an image, then the next time they look at a field, perhaps they’re seeing it differently.”

The inspiration was actually born during his time as an MLA, travelling back and forth between Edmonton and Calgary.

“I didn’t really spend a lot of time looking at the scenery, I was so focused on driving,” he said. “Photography drove me to actually be much more aware of my surroundings, and the more I became aware, the more I realized this province is spectacular.”

The Secret Garden took months to complete, and pairs the boldest colours with the softest complexions.

The images may appear surreal, said Havelock, but it’s all part of their emotional appeal.

“I want them to be a bit confused as to what the image is,” he explained. “Is this a painting or is this photography?”

“I think if I can get them to start and do that with my images, when they’re out and about, they’ll do it with everything that’s around them.”

Havelock’s work has been displayed all over Alberta at trade shows, universities galleries.

The Secret Garden will run until June 8 at the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie (9839-103 Ave.).

For more information visit <http://aggp.ca/>.

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