

# Neighbours of Hammonds Plains

MARCH 2023



**Alexander L. Kalamkarov**  
Explores Mystery of Spirit  
in his March Art Show

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Cover Photo: CreativeAlex Photography



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Dear residents,

March is here! And so is spring! Groundhog Day was on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Did you know that Fred – a groundhog in Quebec – died hours before he was supposed to predict if winter would go on for another six weeks? Fortunately, we have our answer: Shubenacadie Sam saw her shadow.



In other news, this month's Calendar of Events is jam-packed with restaurant music nights. Fridays seem to be the music night of choice, so you'll have to carefully select (or stagger) your dinner plans. Dinner at one restaurant and dessert at another, perhaps? St. Patrick's Day and March Break are approaching, of course; The Deerfield Pub has you covered: An all-day Irish Menu and for the kids, a free first come, first served drop-in golf session.

Our Kids Corner is the Simple Stone Flower and Animal Craft. Although it's not holiday-themed or seasonal, I think as you read the cover story, you'll understand why we chose this craft.



This month, we feature Alexander L. Kalamkarov, a researcher, professor and an artist. Alex was born and raised in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, in the region of Transcaucasia. He has a Ph.D. and a D.Sc. in mechanics and mathematics from Moscow State University, which he likens to "the Harvard of Russia." Both of Alex's parents are Armenian and Alex has lived quite an international life himself. He has lived in Moscow for 20 years, Georgia for 16 years and Paris for two years. But the longest he has stayed in one place is Canada – for 31 years – and he says he "will still be here for some time."

Alex has participated in art shows and academic conferences across the globe. And we're in luck: He's having his biggest art show to date right here in Halifax, at Nova Scotia Archives' Chase Gallery, from March 4<sup>th</sup> to March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. In this issue, you'll read about Alex's development as an artist, his inspirations and what's next for him. I think his slate stone art will be of particular interest to our readers. I'm sure you'll love reading about him and getting a taste of his work in our photo spread. I hope you'll find the time to go out and see his art in person this month!



*Leah Douglas*

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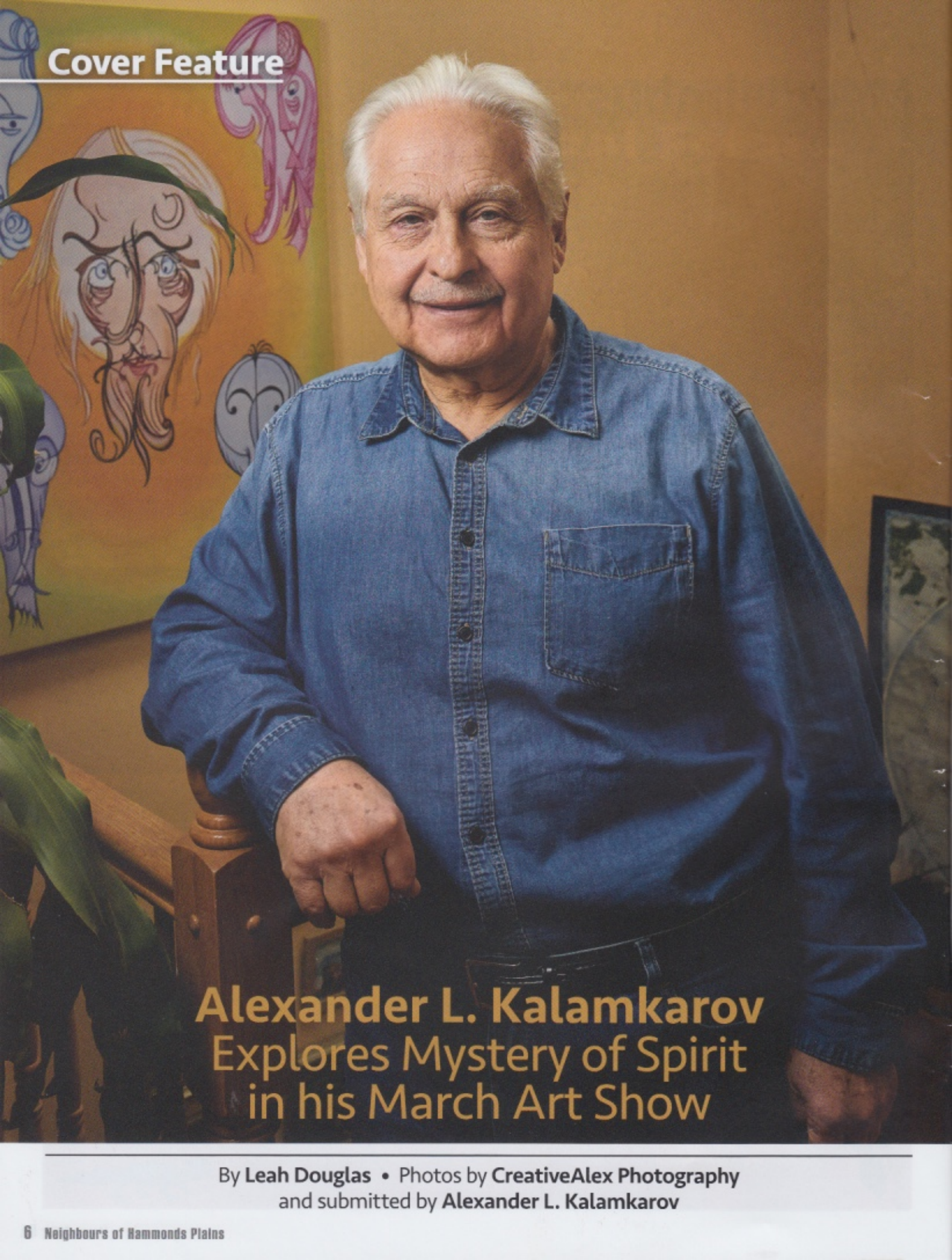
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**Cover Feature**

## **Alexander L. Kalamkarov Explores Mystery of Spirit in his March Art Show**

By Leah Douglas • Photos by CreativeAlex Photography  
and submitted by Alexander L. Kalamkarov



For Alexander L. Kalamkarov, life is empty if he isn't creating things. It's a philosophy he adopted from the Stoics. A mechanics and engineering professor by trade, Alex is devoting the next stage of his life to art.

He's already amassed a large body of work. He has thousands of drawings, which he uses as blueprints for his canvas paintings, ceramic masks and

statuettes. Another medium Alex works with is slate stones. He paints abstract faces on the rocky, slanted surfaces, which he then attaches to wooden pedestals. (Between academic research and painting in oil and acrylic, he's also managed to pick up woodworking). The stones are collected from Point Pleasant Park and beaches on the Atlantic Ocean. The shape and reliefs of the stones provide inspiration for Alex, guiding what he paints. Every art piece is unique, because no stone is identical.

"These stones are created by nature over millions of years, by glaciers, ocean waves and winds," Alex says. "Since 2021, I have created over 85 slate stone paintings and I continue to be excited by this direction."

He names each of his works after a philosopher or a notable person: Aristotle, Socrates, Beethoven, Modigliani, Hans Christian Andersen.



Alex in Georgia



This mysterious landscape is full of life. There are strange looking flowers and plants, eggs and small creatures. This could be the Earth many years ago



This surrealistic landscape reveals a mysterious unity of a medieval castle with harmonious objects on the ground and in the sky

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Alex's style has evolved over the years. When he was living in Paris in the early 1990s, he enjoyed doing nature and architectural landscape paintings. He has since moved on to faces. They are, by his own admission, in no way photorealistic.

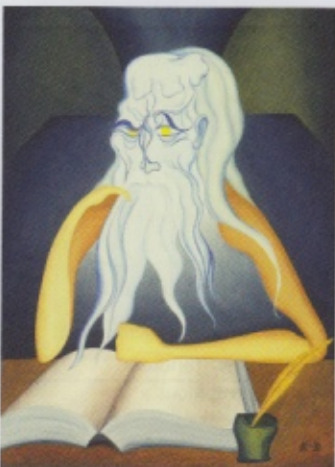
"It's not because I'm not able to draw the shape of the eye," Alex says. "My feeling is different. When you look in the eyes, what do you see? You have certain emotions and feelings of what is behind the eyes, what that person thinks, what is their inner emotions and life."

Just as emotive eyes are important, he adds that the same is true, to an extent, for the nose and mouth. Alex admires the art of Amedeo Modigliani and Edvard Munch, who didn't always paint with the intent of copying the human face. He says his favourite artists are Amedeo Modigliani and Vincent van Gogh.

Though Alex has not made a living from art, it's remained an ongoing part of his life. While pursuing doctorates in mechanics and mathematics at Moscow State University in the 1980s,



This ancient pipe-like instrument called "duduk" or "dudukki" looks simple, but it has a wonderfully deep polyphonic sound. Playing duduk and singing has been a tradition in Armenia and Georgia for centuries. This is an old musician playing the instrument. One can feel a deep and somewhat sad melody through the colours of the background



Ancient books with scriptures, drawings and chronicles have been commonly written by monks in secluded cloisters and kept for ages as the most precious treasures. This is an image of such a monk working in deep concentration



This painting is full of harmony of shapes, contours and colours. Truly, when you look at this picture, you can't tear yourself away from it



Ceramic Masks



2015: 18x33cm



2018: 25x32cm



2019: 20x38cm

he joined the Association of Graphic Artists and the Union of Artists of the Academy of Sciences. He became a member of the International Federation of Artists in 1990. Through these memberships, Alex has had the opportunity to take part in numerous art shows around the world. In 1991, he participated in a large art exhibition at the Moscow Manege Central Exhibition Hall.

Raised in a family of musicians in Tbilisi, Georgia, Alex was never inclined in that direction. But he has always drawn and as an adult, he began to paint. He describes his style as expressionist and surrealist.

"My artwork portrays faces and bodies, scenes from nature and architectural landscapes. But they don't copy them," Alex says. "They are more likely to convey impressions, emotions and aesthetics."

Colour is an important element in Alex's art. He likes pure colours and bold compositions. Blues, purples, pinks and yellows are often seen in his paintings. Sometimes, he'll use contradictory colours for effect.

His work attempts to shine a light on the fantastical and beautiful aspects of the world. Alex observes that there are a lot of

beautiful places in Nova Scotia — Lunenburg, Chester, LaHave, Antigonish, Cape Breton — though his landscape art isn't representative of any particular place.

In essence, Alex is capturing what he calls a "Mystery of Spirit." It's the title of his upcoming solo art show, which runs at Nova Scotia Archives' Chase Gallery from March 4<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The opening reception will be held at the Chase Gallery on March 4<sup>th</sup>, with additional receptions on March 8<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>.

The art show, which is sponsored by Dalhousie University and CIBC Doyle Jacobs Advisory Group, comes four years after Alex's book of the same name. *Mystery of Spirit* — the book — features 25 ceramic pieces and carvings, 65 paintings and 82 original drawings, all created by Alex between 1975 and 2018. His exhibition at the Chase Gallery will be larger. Over 200 oil and acrylic canvas paintings, slate stone paintings and ceramics will be on display; the human spirit is a common subject throughout.

This isn't Alex's first art show in Nova Scotia. In fall 2002, he had a large solo art show at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. It was awarded the Nova Scotia Arts Council Grant and

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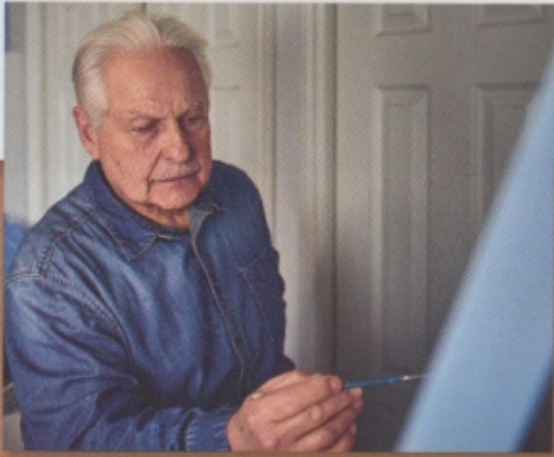
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served as the backdrop for many events at Pier 21, including the Governor General's Awards. Alex has also showed his paintings at art exhibitions at the Dalhousie Art Gallery and NSCAD's Anna Leonowens Art Gallery.

He is set to show his selected works at London Art Biennale this July and over 16 selected works at Art3F Art Fair at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles this September.

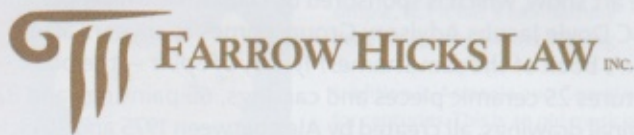
Alex "cordially invites" everyone to visit his art show in Halifax, "Mystery of Spirit." You'll find something bigger than what he's taking across the pond.



Alex Kalamkarov's solo retrospective art show, "Mystery of Spirit", will be held at the Chase Gallery at Nova Scotia Archives from March 4<sup>th</sup> to March 29<sup>th</sup>. Admission is free.

Receptions will be held on March 4<sup>th</sup> from 1pm-2:30pm, March 8<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-7:30pm and March 25<sup>th</sup> from 1pm-2:30pm. For more information and to see his web art gallery, visit [alexkalamkarov.com](http://alexkalamkarov.com)

**Alexander L. Kalamkarov** is a researcher, professor and artist in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was born and raised in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, in the region of Transcaucasia. He immigrated to Canada in 1993 and has worked at Dalhousie University for almost three decades, where he became professor emeritus in March 2022. He has published an album of art, eight books and over 350 research papers. Alex has studied art at Surikov Art Institute, NSCAD University and Centre for Craft Nova Scotia.



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