

# Digital artist to speak about art and technology

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Eric Chan, a.k.a. eepmon, will give a talk at the NB Museum in mid-August.  
Photo: Submitted

SAINT JOHN • Digital Artisan Eric Chan said it does not matter if you are from New York or Saint John when it comes to digital art, because the internet has leveled the playing field.

Chan, who is known online by his pseudonym, eepmon, will be giving a talk at the New Brunswick Museum about incorporating digital art into institutions such as museums.

“I came into the art world in a bit of an unorthodox manner,” said Chan, an Ottawa native who studied computer science at Algonquin College and information technology, interactive multimedia and design at the University of Ottawa.

Chan uses technology in innovative ways to and mixes “the new with the old,” with the goal of bringing digital art to the forefront of the art world. He said the traditional gallery-centric art world has been slow to accept digital art as true artwork.

Chan has collaborated to produce design work for major companies including Marvel Entertainment, Canada Goose, Microsoft Xbox 360 Europe, Mini Cooper Canada and more.

“I grew up playing video games and was obsessed with pixels,” said Chan. “I would find out exactly how many pixels made up an image of Mario and draw it. I knew early on that I wanted to create using technology.”

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During a recent performance in New York, Chan used an algorithm that changed with the weather.

“I painted in the gallery while a real-time projection would project colours and shapes onto my painting based on the weather conditions outside the gallery,” said Chan, who said this is just one example of how museums can incorporate new technology.

Chan said the marriage of art and technology is not just about creation, but also about dissemination. He recently partnered with the Canada Science and Technology Museum to create a 100-foot mural in which “each part tells a different story.”

He said the project will be smart-phone friendly and allow people to scroll through the mural.

“Everybody has a smartphone,” said Chan. “It’s the most accessible way to get your message out there and I think it can really be used to get the younger generation into museums.”

Chan said although geography in the art world is becoming more irrelevant, digital artists still have the opportunity to promote their city.

“Creators in Saint John can activate the city but I think as we continue down the road, technology will make location a non-issue,” said Chan.

In the meantime, local digital artist Josten Burhoe said it is still difficult to break into the art scene in Saint John when working in a digital medium.

Burhoe, who is self-taught, has been selling digital art for about 10 years in Saint John and has exhibited his work at a number of galleries in the city but said he still makes most of his profits selling his prints at music festivals.

“The art institutions in Saint John are definitely slow to accept a print that was produced digitally as a piece of original fine art,” he said.

Burhoe said he hopes to see more involvement of young people in galleries in Saint John because they are often quicker to accept alternative form of art.

“When I sell to a younger crowd at music festivals people are definitely more open-minded,” he said. “I’m glad to see the institutions in Saint John doing something to move in the right direction.”

Chan said the exact date of his talk at the NB Museum has not been decided yet but it will be sometime in mid-August.

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