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## **Zed Woman a powerful exhibit**

by LAURIE HILL

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Step into the Colborne Art Gallery right now and you think you've stepped into a 3-D graphic novel. You move among the dark towers of a troubled city and discover that the mysterious Zed Woman has just been born. Move through time and find her in her childhood. What is she playing with? What clues to her self and her destiny are already in her hands? Move on and find her in her youth. What gigantic struggles are beginning? As Zed Woman grows up, she gradually comes into her own. We move as if we were following a story. We travel to the pivotal moment where she has found the power to transform the world. We witness this great event. And then there's more. We follow her into her triumph, walk into her new city of light and move among the airy towers.

Annie McDonald is the artist. Zed Woman is realized in large clay figures that will astonish anyone who understands the technical challenges of clay. The dark city is evoked in clay, too, and also in painted, freestanding panels. The bright city of hope is floating fabric panels. Dancing figures in light wire mesh show us glimpses of a happy future.

So what are the superpowers of Zed Woman that can bring such transformation?

"They're the opposite of Batman's powers," says the artist. "Zed Woman is more like my Mom and my Aunt Pat." A life-long list of beloved and admired people -- all sorts of people doing their best, acting from resourcefulness, courage and love -- have contributed to McDonald's feeling of what a truly heroic spirit is. She sees that spirit in lots of ordinary people and hopes that visitors to the show will see it in themselves.

This show is fun. It's youthful and accessible. Anybody who has ever enjoyed a comic book can enjoy it. But this goes far beyond comic book heroes. This show is an artistic accomplishment worthy of a much larger venue. It will reward the most experienced viewer of art. It's a technical wonder, an imaginative wonder. It's steeped in thought and emotion. It grieves for the social and environmental wounds of our time and it offers a huge-hearted vision of human beings and our good powers.

Zed Woman and the City: A Sculptural Narrative opens at the Colborne Art Gallery, 51 King St. East, Colborne, June 20 with a reception from 2 to 4 pm. All are welcome. The show continues through Aug. 2. Admission is free.