

New River Art '99 rewards every artist -

Viewers will leave feeling rewarded too

The warmth and intimacy of Perspective Gallery invites a detailed look at New River Art '99.

By Elizabeth Knapp
SPECIAL TO THE ROANOKE TIMES

For artists trying to earn a living from their work, being chosen to participate in a juried show is an important event.

New River Art '99, at the Perspective Gallery in Virginia Tech's Squires Student Center, is the fifth in a series of biennial juried art shows in the New River Valley that began in 1991. This year's show includes 35 works by 32 artists, all of whom live within 100 miles of the New River Valley area.

The exhibition is in Blacksburg for the second time in the event's eight-year, five-show history and is sponsored by the Blacksburg Regional Art Association and the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley. This year, the town of Blacksburg has also given generous support.

Many artists take part in juried group shows, such as New River Art '99, in order to gain a reputation that will lead to solo showings. After a number of solo shows, it is possible that a gallery or promoter will take on the artist as a client and will promote, show and sell the artist's works on an ongoing basis.

"New River Art '99 is the only juried show between Abingdon and Roanoke," said Leslye Bloom, artist and organizing co-chair of the show with Joanna Sunshine. "This is the

best of the best from the region," said Michael Dowell, director of the Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley in Pulaski.

"The exhibition gives the New River Valley a certain level of stature in the arts in the region and across the state," explained Dowell.

"This helps to let everybody know that there's art being produced and being celebrated in the New River Valley." Of the 35 artworks in the show, there are 34 hanging pieces and one freestanding sculpture. There is a wide variety of media represented including works of mixed media, "computage," collage and paintings in watercolor, acrylic and oils.

Diversity describes not only the works but also the artists.

"These are artists from all over the region and these are their current works," said Bloom. "They range from beginners to old hands." There are artists with 50 years of experience, students of art, a former head of the art department at Radford University, professors from Virginia Tech, artists who teach group and individual lessons, certified teachers and some who are none of the above.

In agreeing to juror this show Catherine Hunt accepted an onerous task. She chose 35 works to be included in the show from 213



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The painting "Yellow Apple Faerie" by Barbara A. Capps was the winner of the Christopher B. Huff DDS award and is one of the works featured in New River Art '99 art show in the Perspective Gallery of Squires Student Center at Virginia Tech through June 26.

submissions by 75 artists. Hunt received three trays of slides (with no identifications).

"I looked at the slides many times and allowed myself to respond emotionally and to my aesthetic affinities. I tried to put to-

gether a show from traditional works to ones totally abstract... There is an ineffable quality to this show."

Having lived in Blacksburg from 1978 to 1984, Hunt said it is "exciting to see how this [artistic] com-

munity has expanded in breadth and depth in the inter-

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vening years."

Tom Butterfield, Art Director of university unions and student activities at Virginia Tech, who installed the show, praises it with ease. "The eclecticism of the show adds to its appeal," he said. He added that "this show is fun, dynamic - it's work by people in our community. In general, it's a very accessible show with a lot of the kind of art that people would like to have in their homes." Many of the show's pieces are for sale.

Thirty-two awards were given, each artist receiving one. Top Prize, the \$500 President's Award went to Betsy Hale Bannan of Roanoke whose multipanel acrylic painting of deep, rich tones titled "Aurora" was described by Hunt as a "very simple but powerful piece having a glow and mystery. The \$300 Christopher B. Huff, DDS award went to Barbara Capps for her watercolor "Yellow Apple Faerie," and Marie Livermore's painting in acrylics titled "Fish Bowl" won the \$250 Patron's Award.

Also mentioned by Hunt were two specialized awards, the Tuckweiller Gallery Award for Traditional Realism, which Jennifer Phillips Webster received for her portrait in pencil, "Bobby," and the PFS Photography Award which went to Susan Bidwell for her photograph, "Night Flower."

Frieda Post, whose work, "Totentem," hangs in the show, commented enthusiastically about the innovation shown by artists participating in New River Art '99. "There are a little more experimental piece than in some shows," she said, "some traditional works-hanging metal pieces, collages. There's a rich variety breaking the boundaries of traditional art.

Bloom remarked that "anyone interested in a specific type of art can come see it here and see it done another way. Dowell said "art should teach us something, get us to reflect, look introspectively." This show with its 35 winning artworks gives the viewer that opportunity.

New River Art '99 will be on display through 26 June at Perspective Gallery in Squires Student Center at Tech. Gallery Hours are: Tuesday-Friday: noon to 10 p.m., Saturday and Sunday: 2-10 p.m.

The gallery welcomes group visitations with prior arrangement and can accommodate group visits outside normal gallery Hours/

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