

## Traditional Show Offers Variety of Styles

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The 52nd Annual Juried Art Show of the Virginia Highlands Festival at the Arts Depot is largely an exhibit of traditional watercolors, oils, acrylics and original prints. Many of the works selected by nationally known West Virginia author and watercolorist, Marilyn Hughey Phyllis, convey a sense of sentimentality along with an infatuation on the part of numerous regional painters under the influence of the photographic vision. However, there are many works in the show that transcend mere technical virtuosity and deliver particularly effective visual statements.

Z.L. Feng of Radford, a perennial winner of this exhibition, displays a watercolor portrait of an old man with a beard and sweeping hair. In this work, Feng demonstrates his tremendous rendering capabilities. In addition, he also uses the motion of his transparent brushstrokes to evoke the sense of the wind in the negative spaces of his thoughtful composition. At the same time, Feng achieves solidity, structure and character in the face of a man whose experiences provide the courage to withstand not only environmental challenges, but life's challenges as well.

Emory artist, Vaughn Garland, fuses the solidity of rock with the glow of the late afternoon light in his oil "Street in Pompeii." The overall impasto surface, repeated geometric rhythm in the rock forms, and liveliness in the distant trees, transform this scene from a past memory into an existence of the present.

Charles F. Thompson of Johnson City, paints his figures with a solid sense of volume in an oil "Signs of the Times." A vertical clothed female figure in the foreground is surrounded by a number secondary figures. She gazes out of the right side of the picture plane in a downcast direction. Thompson's heavy line work around the hands is particularly compelling and adds to their sense of weight. The vertical orientation of the figures, the back lighting, the restricted palette and the gestural expressions add up to a solemn effect.

Leslye Bloom of Blacksburg explores her thoughts and feelings through the contemporary medium of digital art. Her manipulated photographs appear to have been printed in many layers. This creates intensity in the color. In addition, the method provides the viewer with multiple vantage points in contrast with the tradi-



Photographs of Artworks by Carol Fields

tional perspective of the western landscape. Her computage "Hot Day" has a surface that simultaneously appears old and new.

Another artist who effectively builds her compositions by layering paint is Mei Shu of Radford. Painted in a traditional watercolor method using transparent overlays of rich color, "Sunset Village" conveys a sense of passing time. The underlying composition and abstract shapes serve as a backdrop for the line work that describes the trees, buildings, windows, and chimneys. Sandi Allesandro of Roanoke presents abstracted still life collages synthesizing rectilinear shapes, text, and sensitively rendered pears. The layers in her work reveal the content of the piece in such a way that it remains an idea - fleeting, submerging, and re-emerging so that the image is not readily tangible. Allesandro's work is restrained and elegant.

Mary Alice Kelly of Kingsport uses a textural approach in her mixed media painting "Song 98." Collaged paper, gestural marks and scraps of musical scores combine to form a crusty paint surface in this nearly square composition. The painting is unified by the large masses of yellow-orange and blue which form an abstracted landscape backdrop. The effect is lyrical. While Kelly collages using actual materials, Sally Mook of Blacksburg creates the illusion of a collage in her acrylic on paper "Do Not Block the Intersection." Mook relies on overlapping representational images of birds,

insects, clowns, and fish to unify her design. The center of interest is created by a beautifully rendered orange-sienna dog reclining across the mid-section of the painting. The implied textures combined with the artist's sense of color makes this a fun piece.

Marion artist Ned Johnson uses an interesting combination of realistic image and flat color in his mixed media piece "Mr. Meyer." This work includes the farmer in a red cap and overalls posed with his farm machinery and trusting dog. Johnson's wood burning technique combined with colored media, highlights the shapes and textures in the composition. While based on a photographic sensibility, the artist's technique serves to develop the image one step further - adding a material presence which allows the work to exist both as an image and an object.

Lynn Taylor of Talbot, Tenn. presents an abstract canvas of a sink drain. Out of the darkness, emerges a sink stopper and a screwdriver. The entire painting is built with brushstrokes and colors that are more suggestive than descriptive. Taylor has certainly created a sense of mystery from subject matter most would consider rather ordinary.

Jack Hagerman of Tazewell presents "Battle Cry," an oil painting which is most convincing in terms of its stark, cold realism. The picture of an elk bellowing out in the cool autumn air is rendered with a sense of atmospheric pictorial depth. The depiction of the warm light on the trees, the

The Awards of Excellence went to Z.L. Feng (top, left) for "Mountain Wind," Emerson (top, right) "The Rose, The Glass and the Redhead," and to Sandi D'Allesandro for a "A Signature Touc." (below)



textural variety in the flora, and the volume of the elk are all impressive in terms of their illustrative qualities. In this painting, the artist has flexed his technical virtuosity muscle.

This show of still lifes, landscapes, portraits and abstractions is so varied and the juror's selections are so democratic that it is sure to offer festival patrons an enjoyable experience. The exhibit

continues through Sunday August 13. Festival gallery hours are Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The Arts Depot is located at 314 Depot Square in Abingdon.