

ACCENT



SIX LOCAL ARTISTS DISCOVER

EXCELLENCE

By JILL MOON

The Telegraph

ALTON — River Bend and art enthusiasts alike share the benefit of Jacoby Arts Center.

The Awards of Excellence 2008 exhibition opened Friday with a reception welcoming patrons to view six regional artists who were selected from the Jacoby Arts Center's third-annual juried exhibition in June 2007. The exhibit runs through Feb. 24.

"We thought it would be good for the jury to pick five or six artists so they could show a body of work," said executive director Kathryn Nahorski, who is a visual artist herself. "In the juried show, you only get to see a few pieces."

An idea of an awards show came from the Art St. Louis show, which has been going on since the early 1980s.

"It's a nice program and we wanted to provide a similar opportunity," Nahorski said.

Most of the artists featured at Jacoby Arts Center and in its Artist Shop are all regional artists.

The featured Awards show artists are Eugene Ursprung, Dave Stine, John DenHouter, Amanda Lea Dickson, Sarah Frost and Damia Smith. Blackburn College's Bob Huber, program chair in fine art, selected the six artists as representing some of the region's best.

The artists' concepts range from exploring temporal states of being, "re-presenting" discarded objects, and the nature of the material determining the final product, among others.

Ursprung, a retired Alton school district art teacher, combines both media and techniques to convey a place with which all associate. His paintings are as much about drawing as they are about painting, causing haunting memories of a familiar place.

Dow resident Stine's process begins in the woods



The Telegraph/MARGIE M. BARNES

Top: A wall of clay on canvas paintings by Jon DenHouter of Edwardsville with "Lights Out" in the foreground is part of the Awards of Excellence exhibit now open at the Jacoby Arts Center in Alton. Six artists' works were chosen for the annual honor. Above: Volunteer Lillian Bates of Alton sets up a copper patina vessel titled, "Profile," by Damia Smith, an SIUE student.

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where he harvests his own lumber. He looks for inspiration in the size and stature of the felled trees, and imagines the blueprints of his finished pieces as he saws the logs into boards.

Stine's work maintains functionality while striving to illuminate the natural beauty of the wood and its source.

DenHouter, an associate professor with the Department of Art and Design at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, uses his family heritage in competitive athletics to explore the sobering effects of physical and mental diminution that affected many once physically active and charismatic family members later in their lives.

He views the landscape settings as stages of support where the human condition unfolds. By placing metaphorical objects in memorialized settings, a sense of elegy, mysticism and a metaphysical atmosphere is created. The paintings speak about the temporal and tenuous nature of human existence.

From Carlyle, Ill., Smith creates vessels seeking to bring life and movement to cold, static, metal materials.

Dickson and Frost are from the St. Louis area.

Dickson's "Alterations" series explores the idea of contemporary beauty as it relates to the ever-expanding industry of cosmetic surgery. Her use of both organic and synthetic materials creates a stirring juxtaposition of the warm, fleshy body and the cold, intrusive surgical procedures inflicted upon the self in an attempt to attain the unattainable beauty.

Frost, a sculptor interested in cultural examination through discarded consumer objects, re-contextualizes actual remains in an attempt

to document and comment on the society that created, used and cast off these items.

An Artists Gallery Talk is scheduled for 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 3, at the center, with opportunities to meet the artists and discuss their works.

For anyone inspired or aspiring to be an artist, Jacoby Arts Center offers several classes in different

mediums from painting and drawing to sewing and writing. A full list of classes is shown at www.jacobyarts-center.org where individuals also can register. The Jacoby Arts Center is a program of the Madison County Arts Council and receives support from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

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