

Handmade Hits

Impressive Works Reveal Mastery of Materials

Columbus OH Dispatch
Sunday, May 11, 2008 4:00 a.m.
By Jacqueline Hall

Imagination, humor, and superb workmanship make "The Best of 2008," the annual juried exhibition of works by members of Ohio Designer Craftsmen, a pleasure to behold.

Dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of crafts, the group, in its 43rd year, has more than 2,000 members in 44 states and Canada.

Brion Clinkingbeard of the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft in Louisville presided over the show, which consists mainly of works by Ohioans with a few pieces by artists from Georgia, Kansas, Vermont and elsewhere.

From 325 entries, juror Clinkingbeard selected 130 works by 89 artists -- an impressive scope of talent.

Whatever the medium, artists have applied a mastery of material and originality of concept. (To see the winners of the 25th exhibition, visit ohiocraft.org.)

Some of the most fascinating works deal with fiber -- but not fiber handled in a traditional manner.

At first glance, "The Measure of a Woman" by Judy L. Kahle looks like colorful pottery, but it is made of cotton fabric and canvas covered with stitching.

"Perfume Bottles" by Susanne Gregg presents an elusive image created with water-soluble material, netting and sheer fabric, all layered and held together by free-motion machine stitching.

Even the most conventional fiber works are approached with originality, as in Rita Steffenson's "Precarious," whose appliques and dense machine quilting achieve a superb feeling of high relief.

Throughout the exhibit, visitors will discover

technical feats that transform the simplest pieces into objects of great appeal.

Using colored pencils layered on copper, Cynthia Cetlin achieves a patina of exquisite richness on the beautiful "Necklace #8."

"Apex," **Don Leman's** egg-shaped wooden creation built of 277 pieces of various woods, is a thing of beauty.

When humor is added to the mix of imagination and craftsmanship, the results can be unforgettable: Julie Byrne's Bang Bang, a figurative earthenware sculpture; Tadashi Koizumi's "The Night Before My Birthday" and "Pee Pot," fantastic little scenes made entirely of copper and bronze; and Susan Broidy's two "Body Chairs," built of laminated Baltic birch plywood and containing ample human forms.

Some works are hard to categorize: "Empty Shell" by Denise Romecki, a departure from her usual animal and vegetable representations that is made of stoneware, porcelain, copper oxide and glazes; and "I See You" by Pat Antonick, an image of a face made of digitized, quilted, hand-dyed squares that should be viewed from the wrong end of binoculars to be seen in sharp focus.

Every piece, it seems, contributes to proving that far more than just the practical is offered in crafts.

* * *

"The Best of 2008" continues through June 22, 2008, in the Ohio Craft Museum, 1665 W. 5th Ave., Columbus OH.

Hours: 1 to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

Call 614-486-4402 or visit ohio.craft.org.