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Exhibit in Cotuit gathers work of 55 noted artists

Photos



Staff photo by Dave Colantuono

"Dancers," a sculpture by Sam Barber, is among many works by noted Cape Cod artists at the Arts Foundation for Cape Cod's "First Things First" exhibit at the Cotuit Center for the Arts.

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By Johanna Crosby
The Cape Coder
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CAPE COD — Margaret Van Sciver hit the road for art's sake.

She spent about two months driving around the Cape visiting artists in their homes, private studios or galleries to select pieces for the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod's fourth annual regional art exhibit.

"We looked for things that are interesting and for a real variety," says Van Sciver, the show's curator and president of the AFCC's board of directors. "We wanted something to capture the imagination."

The result is "First Things First," an interactive, educational exhibit showcasing a diverse range of works by 55 established artists who create, teach and/or show their work on Cape Cod.

"Cape Cod is home to a spectacular number of talented artists and it's a privilege to highlight 55 of them in this show," Van Sciver says. The free show will be open to the public Jan. 9 through Feb. 6 at the Cotuit Center for the Arts.

Van Sciver talked with each artist in person to get the story behind their work and how they created it. All 15 Cape towns are represented in the show.

Many people are reluctant to visit an art gallery or art museum, much less an artist's private studio, Van Sciver says. The exhibit is a rare opportunity for the public to catch a glimpse of the Cape's rich art scene under one roof.

The show features many of the pieces you'd expect to find in a traditional art exhibit: oils on canvas and panels, acrylics, watercolors and pastels. But the emphasis is on showcasing the variety of art created on the Cape. There are examples of dozens of different mediums and techniques including oils on muslin, small and life-sized bronze sculptures and works in metal, glass, ink and Italian smalti (mosaic). One artist created a man's torso out of beeswax and terra cotta.

Some pieces are made with unusual materials and found art such as X-rays, metal, cloth, wire and even rope. Hyannisport artist Sam Barber used tree branches to create the illusion of movement in his sculptures of "Dancers," which are accented with oil paint and glitter. Another unusual piece is Jerome Greene's "The Courier," a reverse oil painting on glass of an Eastern rig. The Provincetown artist wanted to immortalize the wooden fishing vessel that sank off its Hyannis mooring a few years ago.

"It has gone to Davy Jones's locker," Greene quips. "There aren't many around anymore." For his canvas he used a large picture window removed from a house where he was doing carpentry work. Painting on the glass window, which measures 53 by 53 inches, was a challenge.

"I wanted to see if I could do it," says Greene who painted on the backside of the glass and had to turn it over to see the result.

Clarke Buchanan of Marstons Mills fashioned his "Cowboy Hat" out of a silver maple cut down on the Old Kings Highway in Barnstable Village.

"It was saved for art's sake," says Buchanan who maintains "it's always better to turn a tree into something that can be on the mantel than in the fireplace."

Buchanan learned the art of turning cowboy hats on a wood lathe from a master. It took him about 12 hours of labor to create the cowboy hat.

"I love working with wood," he says. "You discover the shape inside of it. It's very satisfying. I love the grains, textures and colors."

The exhibit is a major part of the AFCC's mission of arts promotion and education. In its fourth year, the exhibit has grown in popularity, Van Sciver says happily. Last year's exhibit attracted 3,000 patrons including 2,000 schoolchildren.

"Every year more and more people come," she says. "They know it's relevant and creative." The exhibit is child-accessible. Artwork is hung lower than usual at the height of 4 feet, right at a child's eye level. School groups are invited to take a docent-led tour. A series of child-friendly events and art instruction will be held throughout the month.

Each piece in the show is accompanied by a short text about the artist explaining how and why his or her piece was created. The text is written in easy to understand language, not art lingo, Van Sciver says.

"Our goal is to get people to stop and look at the fabulous things that are being created and maybe try it themselves," she says.

If you go...
 What: "First Things First," an interactive art exhibit
 Where: Cotuit Center for the Arts, 4404 Route 28, Cotuit
 When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Jan. 9 through Feb. 6
 Admission: free
 Information: 508-362-0066

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