

September 2013

New River Art 2013 enters the digital age

By Gerri Young

This year marked the return of the New River Art Juried Biennial to the task list of the Blacksburg Regional Art Association (BRAA). It is the 12th exhibition held under this name and is managed by BRAA every six years. In between, the show is held by Jacksonville Center for the Arts in Floyd and the Pulaski Fine Arts Center of the New River Valley.

The BRAA team coordinating the 2013 show consists of Leslye Bloom, artist and seasoned veteran of the show planning; Diana Francis, marketing and gallery manager for The Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg and myself, artist normally entering, not planning, exhibitions.

I thought it would be something good to learn; all the ins and outs of planning a show. "It's not too much work," said Bloom.

Yeah, right.

Working on the biennial made it impossible to write a feature story for this month's newsletter. Too hard to get my subject, do the interview, line up Teri Hoover, my trusty photographer friend and BRAA member, write the article, etc., etc.

After all, what else was there to do besides simultaneously handling the first BRAA exhibit at the Jacksonville Center?

Biennial parking planning for winners delivering their work to Perspective Gallery, gathering and preparing mailing labels for the marketing postcard, writing a letter to our sponsors and donors to let them know how things were going. Double-checking everything.



211 artworks
were entered
36 pieces
featuring both 2D and
3D were accepted
following detailed
consideration and
rating by the jurors. A
7-point rating was used
and only works rated
6.0 and higher were
invited to the gallery.

Learning what to do with the new computerized system we used for taking entries deserves a lot of close attention, always touched with a bit of fear that something we'd do inside of it would cause everything to disappear into the great unknown, earning us, the Blacksburg artists, the reputation of having un-created this nearly historic, long-awaited event.

We got seriously started working on the planning in early 2013, around February, I think. Visions

■ Upcoming

September 6–29

*Central Virginia Watercolor Guild
MuGuffey Art Center, Charlottesville*

This 22nd annual show features 56 Virginia artists. More information at www.central-virginia-watercolor-guild.org.

September 15

*Singing Workshop
Torgersen Hall Museum, Virginia Tech
Campus, 1–3 p.m.*

The Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech is sponsoring this singing event led by visiting artist Elise Witt. Free; registration required at 540-231-0843 or bailey89@vt.edu.

September 29

*Swinging to the '40s!
Smithfield Pavilion, Historic Smithfield
Plantation, Blacksburg, 3–5 p.m.*

Join in an afternoon of music by the Old Pros Orchestra and wine and cheese fare featuring Beliveau Estate wines. Fee is \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door. All proceeds benefit the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center. For more information, call the museum at 540-382-5644.

October 10

*A Taste of Wine and 19th Century Culture
Holiday Inn, 99 Bradley Drive
Christiansburg, 5:30 p.m.*

Sponsored by the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center, this event includes an art lecture by Scott Crawford. The cost is \$20 and reservations are required. For more information, call the museum at 540-382-5644.

October 18

*New River Art Reception
Perspective Gallery, Squires Student
Center, Virginia Tech Campus, 5–9 p.m.*

Enjoy the winning entries in this biennial juried show.

New River Art continued from page 1

of piles of paper applications and CDs full of art photos drove us to be innovative and think, surely, by now someone has automated this process. A Google search quickly led us to several choices and, after some consideration; we called the folks at Call for Entry—CaFÉ for short.

The real people behind the system walked us through how it worked in a conference call with the three of us staring at computers. We liked what we saw, bought the deal with New River Art funds and sat down for another conference call with computers to go through an hour of training. When the CaFÉ people weren't personally helping us, we checked out the online guide with step-by-step instructions for everything from entering, loading photos, paying, jurying, notifying artists and more.

Taking this enormous leap into the future of managing exhibitions came with some serious concerns.

Backups? Yes, multiple times a day. Learning curve for the three of us? Yep. Pay for the service? Yep. But the one that made us cringe was what was going to happen when we told our members, "This is it. No paper, no CDs, you enter through CaFÉ or not at all."

Actually, we were nicer about it than that. We didn't force artists to pay online. We let them have one old-fashioned payment option—they could write a check. (Only one out of over 70 did.) They could pay by PayPal or credit card online. Most everyone used the later. I won't tell you who the check writer was, but he lives in Roanoke and paints a whole lot better than he pays online.

We didn't just throw everyone to the wolves for learning the system either. We held a workshop to help members stressed about the process and to test it before announcing to the world that it was live. We put together a PowerPoint presentation with screen shots and detailed instructions. We made test entries ourselves. (None of us entered the competition.)

We allowed probably the longest entry window—four months—in the history of the New River Art show so no one could use the excuse of not having enough time.

It was thrilling to see our first application come in from a teacher in Farmville who would never have known about our show without CaFÉ. It only took her a couple of days to find us, thanks to the "new opportunity" emails CaFÉ sends out to its members.

continued on page 4

Donors supporting awards program:

Nadine Allen Memorial Fund

Mish Mish Art Supply, Blacksburg

Virginia Tech Center for the Arts, Blacksburg

New River Land Trust, Blacksburg

Miller off Main Gallery, Blacksburg

Leslye Bloom, artist and individual donor, Blacksburg

The Studio School, Roanoke

The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery Inc., Blacksburg

Partners supporting administration costs:

Blacksburg Regional Art Association

Jacksonville Center for the Arts, Floyd

Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley, Pulaski

Jurors:

Michael Haga, College of Charleston, School of the Arts, Charleston, SC

Jeffrey Allison, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

Robin Roucher, Virginia Tech, Perspective Gallery, Blacksburg, VA

www.newriverart.org

Exhibit Opportunities

Floyd Oktoberfest September 28

Chantilly Festival Farm, Floyd

This event is sponsored by the Jacksonville Center for the Arts and Chantilly Festival Farm. Vendors of arts and fine crafts are encouraged to apply. The festival is from noon until 6 p.m. and the deadline for application is Sept. 17. For more information, visit www.jacksonvillecenter.org/FloydOktoberfest.

BRAA Exhibition at The Jacksonville Center October 7 – December 9 Floyd

Entry for this first joint venture is open to all BRAA members with a peer jury process to select the works for the exhibition. No entry fees, no awards. Hurry, deadline for entry is Sept. 21. For more information, visit <http://braaarts.wix.com/blacksburgart>.

Other Opportunities

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowships

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond is now accepting applications for its 2014-15 Visual Arts Fellowships: \$8000, professional artists; \$6000 graduate students; and \$4000 undergraduates. The application deadline is Nov. 8. Application and eligibility guidelines at <http://www.vmfamuseum/fellowships>.

Steppin' Out Design Contest

Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. is sponsoring a design competition for the Steppin' Out 2014 T-Shirt. For more information, visit <http://www.downtownblacksburg.com/>.

Upcoming continued from p. 1

October 21-24

Pat Dews Workshop

Zehmer Hall Conference Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville

Through daily water media demonstrations, positive critiques, and working beside the students, Dews helps take the "fear out of painting." For more information, contact Patricia Travers at 434-977-3506 or propagule@aol.com.

Artist Tip:

The comment made most often by the jurors regarded poor photo quality. No matter how wonderful your artwork might be, if the photo does not do justice to the work, the juror can have a difficult time rating it as high as it might deserve.

Plein air in pretty places

Late in the summer, BRAA member Donald Sunshine told of plein air days in his winter home in Florida — a weekly group of painters gathering in different locations to enjoy the pleasure and challenges of painting surrounded by nature.

Since that time, a small group of BRAA artists have enjoyed the same experience in the Blacksburg area.

Places already visited include member Teri Hoover's home and garden on Draper Road. During this summer's area garden tour, this location attracted 500 visitors and even a plein air painter the day of the tour. This wonderful place quickly became the first location for the BRAA plein air group.



Scene from the impromptu plein air session at Smithfield Plantation's colonial garden (above), painted by Gerri Young.

Charlotte Chan (left) painting in Teri Hoover's garden. (Photo: Teri Hoover)

Two sessions at Smithfield Plantation have taken place; one organized and one impromptu. This location offers vintage buildings, long views and colonial gardens.

On September 15, the group is scheduled to go to Make-A-Diff Ranch in Newport, thanks to the arrangements made by new BRAA member Ava Howard. On Sept. 25, at 10 a.m. the group will meet at Marie Collier's house at 1100 Deerfield Drive, Blacksburg. She has a lovely long view from the back of her house.

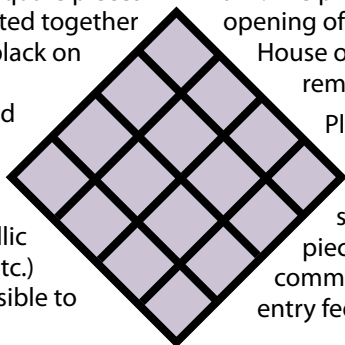
Plein air events are announced through the BRAA Facebook page, on the webpage and through direct email to members. To get on the plein air email group specifically for people interested in plein air painting or drawing, email braaarts@gmail.com.

The events are free and open to all interested artists, not just members.

BRAA artists invited to square off

Art in 16 Squares project announced

Blacksburg's 16 Squares town logo has inspired a project to showcase local artistic talent. Sixteen 12" square pieces will be selected and mounted together "on point" within a larger black on point background. BRAA exhibiting artists are invited to submit a square for jurying. To enhance unity in the overall piece, each square must contain metallic copper (paint, metal, ink, etc.) and a color as close as possible to



blue Pantone 2955. All 2-D media are welcome. Entry deadline is March 1, 2014. The project will debut at the opening of the Alexander Black House on May 1, 2014 and will remain until early September.

Please email Paula Golden at paulacgolden@comcast.net to express interest in submitting one or more pieces for this high profile community project. There is no entry fee.

■ Now Showing

July 15 – October 15, 2013

(except where indicated otherwise)

Denisse Bento, See Mark Optical, 2401 S. Main Street, Blacksburg

Riley Chan, Real Life Dental Care, 202 South Main Street, Blacksburg

Charlotte Chan, Zeppoli's, 810 University City Blvd., Blacksburg

Nancy Norton, StellarOne, Arbor Drive, Christiansburg

Diane Relf, Brown Insurance, 100 Hubbard Street, Blacksburg and ICTAS, Virginia Tech campus (until mid-November)

Cecilia Riegert, ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus (until mid-December)

Lois Stephens, Holtzman Alumni Center Gallery, Virginia Tech Campus (until January)

Joanna Sunshine, Village Center, Warm Hearth Village, Blacksburg (Sept. 9–30)

Joanna and Donald Sunshine, The Gallery at Glade Church, 1600 Glade Road, Blacksburg (August–September)

Gerri Young, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, 700 N. Main Street, Blacksburg

■ Kudos

Congratulations to **Danie Janov**, whose mixed media work, *Abulette*, was juried in to the International Society of Experimental Artists' 22nd annual exhibit at the Big Arts Center in Sanibel, Fla., Oct. 18 – Nov. 27.

"To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it."

~ Kurt Vonnegut

New River Art continued from page 2

Entry #7 brought our first BRAA member into the competition. This lady attended our workshop for terrified entrants and succeeded with flying colors!

Our very last entrant, another BRAA member, was savvy enough to use the system unassisted, but stressed at the very thought of putting her work in the running. She hit the SUBMIT button at 11:59 p.m. on the very edge of the midnight closing.

In all, 22 BRAA members entered; a number I was very happy with and way more than entered the last time the old-fashioned way.

Between opening and closing of the application window, some weeks no one entered and we worried about being the art-less show no one came to.

Then came the deadline month.

Every day someone new or familiar showed up in the entry roster. We entered the system often to see what was happening. I really wanted to hit 100 pieces and was worried we wouldn't make it for a while, but August took care of that. I raised my goal to 125.

The care and helping of our members, and a couple non-members I happen to know, increased.

"My photos won't load, something's wrong with the system."

Nope, something was wrong with their photo size, the most frequent issue encountered. I quickly learned to inquire, "Windows computer or Mac?" On Mac, sizing the photo files is a snap. (Cozy up to Preview in your Applications list.)

"I want to put in five photos of my sculpture." Nope, three per entry and we expected them to be three different artworks. Ok, we'll write the 3D issue on our list of lessons learned to consider next time.

From "I don't know how to begin," to "my photos are terrible," to "I love this new system" to "this system has so many problems, sign me Disgusted," we heard from maybe 10 artists needing

assistance and we held their hands until they were in.

My personal favorite was another nervous user. "I am so thrilled!" she said. "I got through the NRV Art Show entry process just fine, thanks to your help in getting started. I am amazed at how easy that organization made it for artists to get through the posting of art, payment, etc. I think it nothing short of a miracle for anybody to find out the existence of such a useful, well-planned website for show entries."

The thing we are most grateful for?

None of us were jurors with the difficult task of rating and selecting the final works!

But the best part about the jurying is that it, too, was done completely online. We, the administrators, loved the system and the jurors did, as well.

By the entry deadline, over 200 pieces were submitted. The variety of work is terrific and we can hardly wait to see the real thing open to the public on Oct. 2. Don't miss the reception on Oct. 18, 5-9 p.m. in Perspective Gallery inside the Squires Student Center at Virginia Tech. ■



BRAA Officers

- Robi Sallee**, president
- Nancy Norton**, co-vice president
- Danie Janov**, co-vice president
- Tom Barnhart**, membership
- Vikki King**, treasurer



www.facebook.com/BlacksburgArt

Send Facebook news postings to:

Gerri Young at
younggerri@googlemail.com
or **Nancy Norton**
at nancypnorton@comcast.net

Twitter @BlackburgArt1

<http://www.blacksburgart.org/>

Send news, photos, comments, or newsletter suggestions to Lois Stephens (stephens1@pemt.net)

Thanks to Mish Mish for providing printed versions of this newsletter. Please support our local art supply store!



The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Color of Red" (left, handmade paper and mixed media, 26 x 19") by Joanna Sunshine. This and more of her work can be viewed at the Village Center Gallery at Warm Hearth Village through the end of September.