

Art

The Berks Art Alliance show: competent, well-made

By RON SCHIRA

READING EAGLE CORRESPONDENT

This edition of the Berks Art Alliance Annual Open Juried Exhibition, on view at the Reading Public Museum through Sept. 6, distills 125 artworks from 358 entries and becomes a magnet not only for artists from our local

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counties, but from Harrisburg, Scranton, Philadelphia, parts of New Jersey and Delaware. The exhibit, a popular mainstay of the cultural community for 30 years, is presented every other summer, alternating between the museum and the GoggleWorks.

The chosen jurors for this event were artists Douglass Wiltraut and Nancy Barch, both heavy with credentials and active members of the Philadelphia art scene.

For their judging criteria, the alliance instituted its own provisions that basically require the jurors foremost to seek out excellence in media and composition while using their best judgment as to what moves them in presentation and theme.

Eleven awards that included more than \$3,000 in cash prizes were bestowed, two more awards than previous years — with the addition of the Jack Coggins Memorial Prize and the Alma Woods Memorial Prize as administered from the late artists' trust fund.

Of course, and to be expected, the show strongly supported academic and realistic concerns with painting



PHOTO BY RON SCHIRA

Steve Schuering's "Pile of Soldiers," oil

as the most important medium; photography, collage and sculpture trail in order.

A few excellent abstractions — such as "Ten Gallon Hat" by Amy Schade, "The Apprentice" by Peggy Reisch and a conceptual sculpture titled "Kyrie Elysion" by Hector Zelidon — did catch my eye, but unfortunately did not catch any awards.

The Award of Excellence went to Dot Bunn's oil painting of a row of dolls on a shelf, titled "Sock Monkey Magic." Bunn also won the Award of Merit II for "Riverbed II," a large atmospheric landscape of a canyon bottom. Steve Sch-

If you go

The Reading Public Museum is located at 500 Museum Road. Call 610-371-5850 or visit www.readingpublic-museum.org for hours and general information.

euering received the Award of Merit I for "Pile of Soldiers," an extremely detailed painting of toy soldiers strewn atop a layer of comic books.

Honorable mentions apiece went to Debbie Moore for "If I Speak in the Tongues of Men and of Angels" and to Donna

Curanzy-Seltzer for her photograph, "Cathartidae."

Joe Clint Watt received an honorable mention for "Packhound Waiting" as well as Karen Wolf for "Artifacts." Honorable mentions were also given to Michele Byrne for "Art Show Attitude" and to David Rogers for "Stripped Bare."

The Jack Coggins Memorial Prize was conferred to Fran Ross for "Indian River" and the Alma Woods Memorial Prize was granted to Rosemarie Sloat for her painting "Looking for Leda."

Other impressive pieces included "Cal and Buddy" by Catherine Jones, "Bird Skull" by David M. Stallings and "What if" by Todd Shaffer.

Each of these artists approaches the standing issues of portraiture, still life and



PHOTO BY RON SCHIRA

Catherine Jones' "Cal and Buddy," oil

contemporary surrealism with humor and skill.

I do, however, have more of an interest in realism that touches on those traditional matters rather than becomes a mere exercise in dexterity.

An exhibit such as this is meant to wow and dazzle with an artist's ability to create a convincing illusion, and it prides itself on technical expertise.

Indeed, it does so in spades.

If you enjoy looking at well-made, competent artworks by experienced artists — and who doesn't — then this is the show for you.

Contact Ron Schira: life@readingeagle.com.



PHOTO BY RON SCHIRA

Todd Shaffer's "What if," oil

In galleries

Reading Eagle art correspondent Ron Schira's picks for must-see exhibitions this week.

1. "Paul Lancaster at 50

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