

FINE ART

Sculpture show focuses on clarity, visual purity

Janet Purcell

For Times of Trenton

There's a different look to this year's sculpture show at the New Hope Arts Center. You notice it as soon as you step into the room. Although there are 50 works on display, there is no sense of crowding. Each piece holds its own space and seems to speak with dignified elegance.

"This year our jurors (Louise Feder, assistant curator of the Michener Museum of Art, and Yvonne Love, assistant professor of art at Pennsylvania State University) have curated an elegant exhibition, which emphasizes clarity, visual purity, craftsmanship," says Carol Cruickshanks, executive director of New Hope Arts. "Each year we hope to feature a new point of view, and this show is classic, not funky."

That is not to say this exhibit does not have its light moments, however. When you see Melissa Benzinger McGlynn's mixed media *The Golden Child*, you won't be able to help yourself — you'll have to smile. You shouldn't do it, but I know you're going to be tempted to pet this little felted bird with its oversized claws, wings and beak that wears a spoked golden crown. She's a real charmer.

And who doesn't smile when they see new variations of Dana Stewart's *Boomerz*? There's a tiny bronze one in this show aptly called *Sitting on His Laurels* and a bronze one whose body is a bit bigger and his tail stands high — very high. He, too, is aptly titled: *A Tall Tale*.

Balancing this frivolity, however, is a serious work by Angelique Kopacz. Titled *Grasp & Release*, two dozen glasses on a table each hold a cross submerged in clear wax. On the wall above, two dozen concrete hands are displayed reaching, grasping, some holding rosary beads. The story this illustrates with quiet dignity can be read in the posted artist statement.

Displayed nearby is a large ink-on-paper drawing by Wendy W. Gordon of microscopic forms inspired by her study of Ernst Haeckel, a German zoologist. Accompanying the drawing are some sculpted patterns that can be found in the drawing.

As for true elegance, you'll see Rory Mahon's cast bronze *Samara* poised on a maple base as if caught in its downward drift from its host *Sycamore*.

A similar moment in time is depicted in Leora Brecher's white clay sculpture, *Poised*, which stands as elegantly as a toe dancer en pointe.

Georgette L. Veeder's formed, handmade rag paper *Allure* also holds a graceful pose that brings to mind dance. Michael Kehs' sculpture made from holly, buckeye burl and acrylic paint takes the viewer from beautiful posed poise to the graceful bending and reaching of his *Searching For Peace*.

Keeping in mind the pure aesthetic of sculpture, the jurors selected two Justin Long works. His *Body and Soul* is blackened fabricated steel



Justin Long's *Graffiti* is one of the works on view at *Sculpture 2017*, on display at the New Hope Arts Center through July 15. Courtesy of the artist

Sculpture 2017

Where: New Hope Arts Center, 2 Stockton Ave., New Hope, Pa.

When: Through July 15. Hours, noon to 5 p.m. Fridays through Sundays

Contact: 215-862-9606 or newhopearts.org

on a granite base. His *Graffiti* bends and curves, again with the elegance of dance, and is made from fabricated steel and stands on a granite base. Ken Burton brings *Balance* to these sculpture forms with his cherry, spruce and MDE sculpture in which, in "teeter-totter" fashion, a graduated-in-width shaft is positioned atop a cone base. A bird perches near one end and a sphere at the other end — a fine example of precision.

And there are works on display that capture your imagination and open your mind to new ways of thinking. One such work is Connie Bracci-McIndoe's *Floating World*, constructed of petrified clay and glass on a wood base. Go to the side of this textured sphere and when you look into the space where the front and back are separated, you'll discover several small yellow and orange spheres that appear to be floating. Another is Joy Kreves' *The Pomegranate Wasp Story*, a mixed-media work with natural materials. Kreves has a way of turning wasp nests, bark and even a pair of acorns into works of art that tease our minds into paying attention to the natural world in which we live.

Robert Noonan, working in oil on plaster relief, looks at nature in another way with his three square portraits, *Sex in the Garden*, hearts of flowers with his Georgia O'Keeffe sensibility.

There are small works on window sills you should not miss. One is Ailyn Green's cast bronze *Pillow Pile*, in which several small pillow shapes lie tossed about. And in another window alcove are Ruth Jourjine's porcelain *Chameleons I and II*, small, colorful works that are simply a delight to see.

And speaking of seeing, Winifred Weiss has three glazed stoneware works in which the figures' eyes draw you in for serious contemplation. Her *Passing for Happy* has eyes looking upward as if gazing for understanding. Her armless figure, titled *A Sufficient End*, has a poignant look, and her *A Glimmering Girl* dressed in yellow and strands of glimmer looks out to the world with eyes of gentle acceptance.

Michelle Post's cast resin heads called *The Trio* capture three humans who seem to be looking out over the exhibition, one trying to understand, one seemingly captivated and one accepting the peaceful dignity of all she sees.

This sculpture exhibit is different from those of the past 15 years. Yes, there is a mix of humor, recognition of natural elements and classic form as in previous years. But there is an element of elegance that is hard to put your finger on. You sense it as soon as you arrive.