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Textiles steal the spotlight as 'best in show' in 65th Student Annual

Rachel Campbell Feb 24, 2012

Students, friends and family filled the School of Art Gallery Thursday to await the announcement of the winners of the 65th Student Annual.

The prizes being awarded were donated by local business and sponsor All Media Art Supply Co. as well as a total of \$700 donated by faculty members, said Anderson Turner, director of the galleries.

The divisions were based on class standing, having split the prizes between the graduate and undergraduate entries. The juror is the one who chooses all of the awards, Turner said. This year Amy Craft, executive director of Art House Inc., a Cleveland-based nonprofit arts center, took on that role.

Each division spotlights a piece as best of show. Kelsey Leib, senior textiles major, won for the undergraduates with her piece, "Inner Child."

"It's really exciting," Leib said. "I was not expecting it at all,"

This year's Student Annual was the first time Leib entered anything in the show. She had constructed her piece for a feltmaking final last semester and then decided to tweak it a bit before submitting it to be judged.

Also taking home a prize in the undergraduate division was runner-up Eli Gfell, sophomore painting/drawing major, with his piece "Inheritance." Additionally, honorable mentions were awarded to both "Choke" by Ciaran O'Keeffe, senior painting/drawing major, and Elizabeth Given, senior ceramics major, for her piece "Untitled."

Like Leib, Joanne Arnett, a graduate student majoring in textiles, also received best of show. She represented the graduate division with her piece, "Self-Portrait."

The piece portrays what the title implies in the form of a wire weaving. Her son, who was in attendance with her that night, had snapped a photo of her for a passport she was having made. She used this as inspiration for the one of many wire-weaved pieces.

"I've continued with the idea," Arnett said. "I've done eight more, and if I would have had them all ready to hang, I would have submitted them instead, but now I'm glad I didn't."

Arnett had submitted work to the Student Annual in the past, but this was the first time anything she made was chosen to for the show. In addition to "Self-Portrait," she also had a piece called "Eve" that embodies the detailed shape of a woman wearing an apron.

"I was happy just to get in, of course, and it was quite a shock to hear my name," Arnett said. "There's a lot of good work, and my piece is not large, so I was very surprised."

Tabitha Ott, a graduate student majoring in jewelry, was chosen as the runner-up. Like Arnett, she also had two pieces on display. She received the award for the one called "Yo-yo Jewelry."

"All my work is kind of about toys ... but yet [it's also made of] fine materials and there's a juxtaposition between that and plastic," Ott said. "All the pieces are functional, so you can take them apart and play with it."

Her next piece will be a bracelet made of cars, which she assured can be taken apart and rolled around. She had planned to have it done in time to wear for the reception, but said there is still a few more days before it will be ready.

The honorable mentions in the graduate division included Nicole Schneider, a printmaking major and Timothy Stover, a glass major, for "Unravel" and "Untitled," respectively.

These works and more will be available for viewing until March 14 in the School of Art Gallery on the second floor of the art building, Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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