Art Exhibit Underway on Mackinac Island

By Karen Gould

Snowmobiles bringing art enthusiasts to the annual Holiday Art Exhibit parked neatly along Main Street in front of the Mackinac Island Public Library when the show opened Tuesday, December 29, with a reception for the artists. The exhibit can be seen from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays to February 10.

Experienced Island painters and first-time exhibitors displayed a variety of media and an array of subjects. Organizer Pam Finkel featured oil paintings, Tim Leeper displayed watercolors, Claudette Roth painted in acrylic, Tom Boburka used broken mirrors, and Becki Barnwell included watercolors, chalk, and pencil pieces.

About 10 years ago, Ms. Finkel came up with the idea for the show to spice up the holiday season and provide a venue to display the works of local artists.

"The library is a wonderful place to show art," she said. "As a painter, it's a captive audience here at the holidays and it is a nice community event that people look forward to."

Ms. Finkel also teaches art at Mackinac Island Public School and is preparing students for their art show in the spring. She enjoys teaching and finds that the first step for students often is the hardest.

"Teaching all those years down at the school has shown me that you really just need to get people started," she said. "Get them started and then they'll go."

The experience of painting oversized pieces of fruit for a window display at Doud's Mercantile a few years ago turned out to be a surprise for Ms. Finkel.

"That's the first time I've ever painted that big. That's the first time I've ever painted food like that, and I just loved it," she said. Since then she has created several large oil paintings of fruit.

She has been influenced by American painter John Singer Sargent, whose work also influences Becki Barnwell.

This is the first exhibit for Ms. Barnwell, who studied art at the California College of Arts and Crafts, drawing in Florence, Italy, and Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, where she learned the technical demands of botanical illustration.

During the summer, her work can be seen on the walls of the Iroquois Hotel, which is owned by her family.

Her love of art and gardening came together and has been the focus of much of her work.

"I used to garden with my grandmother when she took care of the Iroquois [Hotel] gardens," she said. "I've always had an interest in plants."

Until this summer, when a hotel guest commissioned two paintings, Ms. Barnwell has not sold her work, but painted for enjoyment and for the challenge of illustrating flowers with technical accuracy while maintaining a sense of beauty.

Her watercolors take about one month to complete. She uses fine paintbrushes with only four hairs and a magnifying glass. The process is controlled, and each stroke of the brush requires only a small amount of paint to depict the tiny details of the flower, its stem, or leaf.

"It's the tiny details that don't stand out, yet they impact the entire piece," she said.

Claudette Roth is also exhibiting for the first time. She considers herself an eclectic painter and her subjects can include anything that touches her heart.

"Art is an expression of truth and love," she said of her work. "I captured at the time what I felt inside."

Mrs. Roth has been painting all of her life. Her father had a natural talent, she said, and taught the art to her.

While working on his entry for the show, Tom Boburka said he spent several days moving pieces of mirror around until the image of an owl just appeared.

If you look straight at the owl, he said, you see your own reflection, and that is why he named the piece "Familiar?"

"It took days for the design to come out," he said. "It sat in the middle of my living room floor. Every day I'd rearrange it and I'd walk around it and I'd rearrange it, and one day I just looked down at it and I saw the owl. It made itself. All I had to do is have the patience to rearrange the pieces and not cut my hands all up from the broken mirror."

He worked with black, brown, and gray acrylic paint to add depth between the pieces of mirror using cotton swabs and brushes to create the effect.

Tim Leeper is exhibiting for the third time in the Holiday Show. He uses watercolor in bright, vivid colors. A student of Island artist Richard Wolfgang, Mr. Leeper has been painting for four years and is inspired by the beauty of the Island.

He sells his work and donates the proceeds to breast cancer research. This year he has raised $8,000.

On January 3, he began a cross-county bicycle journey to raise funds for breast cancer research and plans to ride from San Diego, California, to St. Augustine, Florida.

Exhibiting her artwork for the first time, Becki Barnwell uses a magnifying glass and thin paint brushes with only a few hairs to render the fine details of flowers. Details in the leaves can be seen in this close-up of her watercolor called "Roses."

Painting oversized fruit has become a new interest for long-time Mackinac Island artist Pan Finkel. She organizes the annual Holiday Art Show now at the Mackinac Island Library and is the art teacher Mackinac Island Public School. Her work and pieces by other Island artists will be on display through Wednesday, February 10.

Tom Boburka used a broken mirror to create this image of an owl, which he calls "Familiar?" He added paint between the pieces of mirror.

Tim Leeper donates the sales of his work to aid breast cancer research. This year, he has raised about $8,000.

Looking Back

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writers and from a representative of the Mackinac Island Preservation Society.

The final approval of last Wednesday night's (January 9) meeting didn't come off as the agenda suggested it would, action being deferred until the completion by the state of an environmental impact study and reception of a legal opinion from a special designated city attorney, Joel Dowley, of Lansing, Michigan.

Mayor Margaret Doud read some of the letters of protest that have been streaming into her, and the mounting campaign touched off news reports, an editorial in an urban newspaper, television comments, all baffling city council members and Island residents.

James J. Bogan, vice-president of the preservation society, which is engineering the campaign, . . . was present at the meeting to accent the protests sent by mail, arguing that final approval by the city of the development plans for 18 acres comprised of 38 lots would set precedent for extending the plans to the rest of the acreage, largest privately owned parcel on the island. The protesters also argue that the projected development would tax the city's waste and sewage facilities and would tax the Island's solid waste disposal facility, that it would destroy the Island's natural beauty and that the additional summer population would add to the Island's already congested traffic problems.

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Beautifying the St. Ignace lake shore from the Wawatam dock to the northwest part of Moran Bay has long been under discussion in St. Ignace. It was boosted by a creative plan drawn by Fern W. Barrett, engineer, owner of shoreline property on Moran Bay. Following Barrett's plank published in *The St. Ignace News* about four ears ago, a citizen's committee was organized, and the preliminary study materialized for the City of St. Ignace and the DNR.