Newest exhibit at UNR's Sheppard Gallery is a study in how artists see themselves

BY GERALDA MILLER • GMILLER@RGJ.COM • JANUARY 16, 2011

The Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery's dark red walls offer a glimpse of how artists around the world see themselves.

Works by 66 artists from the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia are part of "MYSELF: A Survey of Contemporary Self-Portraiture." The survey-style, multimedia exhibition is on display Jan. 18 through Feb. 18.

Tim Sharman's bright red, curly afro fills half of the canvas and his stubby-faced profile fills the other.

Holly Lynton's eyes are tightly shut, and her mouth is gaping as water splashes her face.

Lilly McElroy throws herself into the arms of an unknown man at a dingy bar.

Emma Bee Bernstein sits on a piano stool in her little black dress and a long strand of pearls with her legs crossed and right hand playing an upright piano. It's one of gallery director Marjorie Vecchio's favorites.

"Her piece is very haunting and very exquisite," she said. "She was a young, emerging, prolific, book publishing photographer. She committed suicide in 2008, December 20th.

"I think it is one of the best pieces in the show."

It was difficult to pick a favorite among this caliber of work, she said.

Vecchio said she has wanted to curate a self-portrait show since coming to work at the University of Nevada, Reno in 2006.

"I wanted to see what sort of insane diversity of types of artwork was being made around the world. ..." she said. "I wanted to see what's going on in self-portraiture -- something as simple as self-portraiture."

It was a surprising, but pleasing, discovery.
"I was surprised that in 2010, almost every single self-portrait, still to this day almost hundred and hundreds of years after the initial history of self-portraiture in Western art, uses still the body and the face," she said. "I thought there would be a lot of abstract work. There are levels of abstraction and metaphor, but the body is wonderfully reoccurring. I was really surprised. I didn't expect that."

A mix of emotions also is expressed – humor, joyfulness, pain and inner turmoil

"But it seems the one thing that's missing is this overexertion of the ego," Vecchio said. "There's a lot of humility in the artwork. I don't know what to make of it, yet."

Just outside the Sheppard Gallery in the Church Fine Arts building, a large student self-portraiture exhibit, called MYSELF TOO, will run concurrently. Six pieces, of the more than 100, were selected by UNR undergraduate art students Andrew Griego and Michelle Lee as best of show and pictured in the free 76-page catalog.

One can't help but wonder what Kathryn Carlson did as she stands with eyes wide open and a red apple on her head, wearing a Puritan collar and a paintbrush in the shape of an arrow in her mouth.

Janos Korda's ceramic sculpture, called "40 years later," has two faces on opposite sides with flames erupting between them.

"I think, overall, just the breadth and the way they represent themselves is just amazing," Griego said of the students' show. "People really interpret themselves in a multitude of ways."

Chris Carnel is a Renoite who started shooting photos in his teens. He is one of the world's most recognizable 'rogue sport' photographers, especially for BMX biking, skateboarding, and snowboarding when they were still fringe and emerging sports in the 80's and 90's. He's photographed all over the world and is published in innumerable magazines, zines, books, catalogs, poster and internet sites.

In Case You Missed It »
WIN $100  MUG SHOTS  KRAFT BOWL PICS  MORE KRAFT BOWL PICS

Subscribe to the Sunday Reno Gazette-Journal for just $1.00 a week.
In Your Voice  READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY

You must be logged in to leave a comment. Login | Register

Kathryn Carlson, age 29, is in the BFA program at the University of Nevada, Reno, focusing on painting. Kathryn got her GED at 17 and attended Western Nevada Community College.

Janus Korda, age 71, has been a student of UNR studying sculpture, ceramics, and painting. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Korda was a Principle Dancer all over Europe before retiring in Reno in 1978.

Related Topics
- Places - University of Nevada-Reno, Reno, NV
- Life - Arts, Painting

Contextual linking provided by Topix