

# 'Watercolor Wisconsin'

## Annual exhibit a showcase for state artists



"Beekeeper, Jardin du Luxembourg" by Harold E. Hansen is part of the "Watercolor Wisconsin" show at Racine's Wustum Museum.

**BY BILL ROBBINS**

brobbins@kenoshanews.com

**RACINE** — An exquisite array of water-based artwork is on display in the 46th annual "Watercolor Wisconsin" exhibit at the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts.

The show features 119 pieces by 86 artists — chosen from 287 pieces submitted by 163 artists from throughout the state, said Bruce Pepich, the museum's executive director and curator.

The artists are from all over Wisconsin, but about 30 percent of them are from Racine and Kenosha, Pepich said.

The museum has created an enormous center for watercolor activity in this area over the past few decades, he said.

"It's nice to see works from across the state and to see the local artists take such an interest in the show, too" he said.

"If people don't enter, you don't have a competition. So it's very important to us that artists continue to participate. And because of that, the show is meaningful."

Pepich is pleased by the variety of imagery in the show.

"It's pretty wide-ranging. There is figurative work, urban images, still lifes, land-

### If you go

**What:** The 46th annual "Watercolor Wisconsin" show

**Where:** The Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, 2419 Northwestern Ave. in Racine

**When:** Through April 27. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

**Admission:** Free

**More information:** Call 262-636-9177 or visit [www.ramart.org](http://www.ramart.org)

scapes, abstracts — it's across the board. And it's a good assessment of what's going on now in painting in Wisconsin."

There are several three-dimensional paper-and paint-based pieces in the show as well.

Organized by the museum since 1966, "Watercolor Wisconsin" exhibits have established Wustum as a focal point for watercolor activity in the Midwest, Pepich said.

Online entry has continued to expand the diversity of cities represented in the show. This year's exhibit includes artists from as close as Kenosha and Racine to as far as Lac du Flambeau, Pepich said.

Jurors for the show were Richard A. Born, senior curator at Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, and Jessica J. Caddell, executive director at the Freeport Art Museum in Freeport, Ill.

Award winners include:

■ Salem resident Harry Wirth won the first place cash award and a Wustum purchase award for his painting, "Point of View," which consists of three jagged-edged slices of a landscape that appear to have been ripped from a single painting.

The three pieces — one larger and two small — are set amid an enormous field of white.

"Point of View" is one of Wirth's "window" pieces, as he calls them.

"It is a landscape that is from a series of my paintings called 'Imaginary Spaces,'" Wirth said.

They are non-traditional paintings, he said.

"As one looks at a scene, many times the



# offers a splash of c

view is obstructed by buildings, trees or other structures," he said. "I design these paintings for the 'negative' or white space around the scene rather than the scene itself."

It's a freshly created series, he said.

"All the new work for me is a result of my sabbatical research last year from the School of Art at Northern Illinois University, where I teach," he said.

Said Pepich: "Harry Wirth's painting provides a glimpse of the landscape. Although the colors are appropriate for what one would see; the imagery is abstracted as if looking at the roadside while traveling in a car on the highway at high speed."

The illusion of looking quickly is further emphasized by Wirth's clever composition, Pepich said.

"He reveals only a few portions of the landscape, leaving large areas of his paper surface blank. The revealed sections appear as if Wirth were cutting through the white paper into a colored image below."

It is a fool-the-eye technique that provides a fresh way of looking at the land around us, he said.

"It also comments on the speed with which we access all information today and hints that we might be missing something in our haste. At the same time, he suggests to us that looking closely will generate rewards that you do not originally expect to find."

■ Amy Misurelli Sorensen of Kenosha won a merit award for her painting, "Warrior Cock Fighter," a figurative piece blending a rooster's head and feathers with a human form.

"Amy does very intriguing works," Pepich said. "They are a combination of a large area of pencil drawing with highlights in acrylic or gouache."

She often realistically renders a figure with something that makes the work surreal, he said.

"In this case, the warrior cock fighter has the head of a male chicken, but the figure looks very much like it's either an overweight guy or a woman



**Kenosha resident Amy Misurelli Sorensen's "Warrior Cock Fighter"**



**"The Game of Life" is this painting by Patrick D.**



**Bruce Pepich**

— the figure is bare-chested and it's like we're looking at someone with breasts."

Misurelli forges highly unusual combinations, Pepich said.

"And you try to figure out what she's saying," he said. "Both men and women have masculine and feminine attributes. She is asking us to think about those, and how they can be put together in different combinations."

■ Alice Rossman of Nashotah won the second place cash award for her colorful painting, "Eastlake," which depicts an urban grocery and deli whose windows are blanketed with graffiti.

Workers are on a ladder and cherry picker on an adjacent

building's brick wall, apparently removing red paint that has graffiti.

"Alice's main body of work for much of her painting career has been floral subject matter," Pepich said.

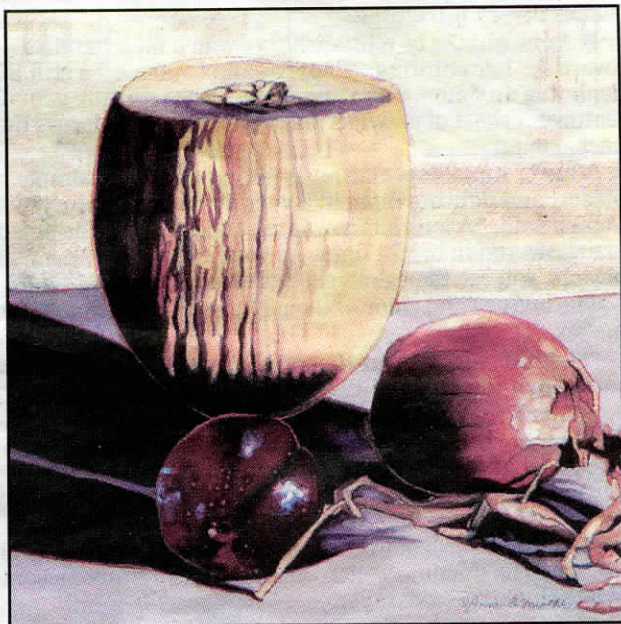
"But then she started doing urban scenes. What you realize is that she's organizing the urban composition with the same kind of control and interest in pattern, shape and layering as she did in her floral compositions."

■ Harold E. Hansen of Hartford won a purchase award for his painting, "Beekeeper, Jardin du Luxembourg." The title refers to a large public park in Paris.

"This is a little corner of the garden with lots of greenery



# Color



The title of "Papyrus and Produce" is a watercolor painting of a fisherman, done by Anne Miotke.

## 'IT'S NICE

*to see works from across the state and to see the local artists take such an interest in the show, too.'*

### Bruce Pepich

Wustum Museum director

and no flowers," Pepich said.

A gazebo-like structure is at the center, along with chairs and other objects. Surrounding it is a grouping of small hives whose structure reflects that of the gazebo, with multi-sided roofs made of metal.

"We think of the French as being very stylish with all the details covered and handled beautifully," Pepich said. "There's this sense of intimacy here, as if you're peering over the hedge in the foreground."

The light is subdued, with shadows among the lush foliage.

"There's something almost fairy-tale-like about this image," Pepich said. "It's so detailed and representational, and it's a charming painting of very

unusual subject matter."

■ Patrick Doughan of Cedarburg won the third place cash award for his painting, "The Game of Life," which depicts an odd sort of poker game. Five men are seated around a wooden table in a rustic cabin. One — the apparent winner — is raking in piles of chips.

"Because of the title, you think there's more at stake than a poker game," Pepich said. "Two of the players are very dejected and upset about losing. One of the losers in the foreground has three aces, so the winner must have had a really good hand."

The man gathering the chips looks almost alien.

"His head is a different shape and his arms are elongated," Pepich said. "He's stretching them so much they're kind of blue. It's very dramatic."

"There's something about this that makes me think of Edvard Munch's painting 'The Scream.' The screaming figure is bald — and this guy's bald. There's a receding background. The colors are almost unnaturally rich."

Like Munch, Doughan paints with numerous marks and dashes.

See **WATERCOLOR**, Page 8



## WATERCOLOR: Big show

From Page 7

"You get a sense of vitality and energy in this piece," Pepich said. "There's a bit of caricature about it, which also makes it very intriguing."

■ Anne Miotke of Whitefish Bay won a merchandise award for her painting, "Papyrus and Produce," a still life depicting an onion, plum and melon. The painting actually features a sheet of papyrus placed horizontally across the background.

"One of Anne's specialties is taking relatively simple objects and lighting them in a very dramatic fashion," Pepich said. "A long shadow is cast and parts of the objects are showered in bright light. As your eye moves along the objects, you see the colors change dramatically."

The texture and color of the papyrus reflects that of the melon.

"She has painted over the top of the papyrus, so there's a sort of fool-the-eye quality about it," Pepich said.

"What's wonderful about works like this is the artist is challenging herself to not only replicate the objects she has selected, but to create a lot of interest through contrasting surfaces, colors and lighting. They sort of ricochet off each other in this piece."

■ Janet Roberts of Brookfield won a merchandise award for her "The Fortune Teller," a realistic portrait of a contemplative-looking soothsayer.

"Janet does lots of figures out of the 1930s to the early 1950s," Pepich said. "This painting is a little more subtle than some of her other pieces. Her figures are always interesting to look at because they present a lot of emotion."

The woman in the painting wears a red, white and blue sequined outfit bearing stars and stripes, a jeweled turban and a cape.

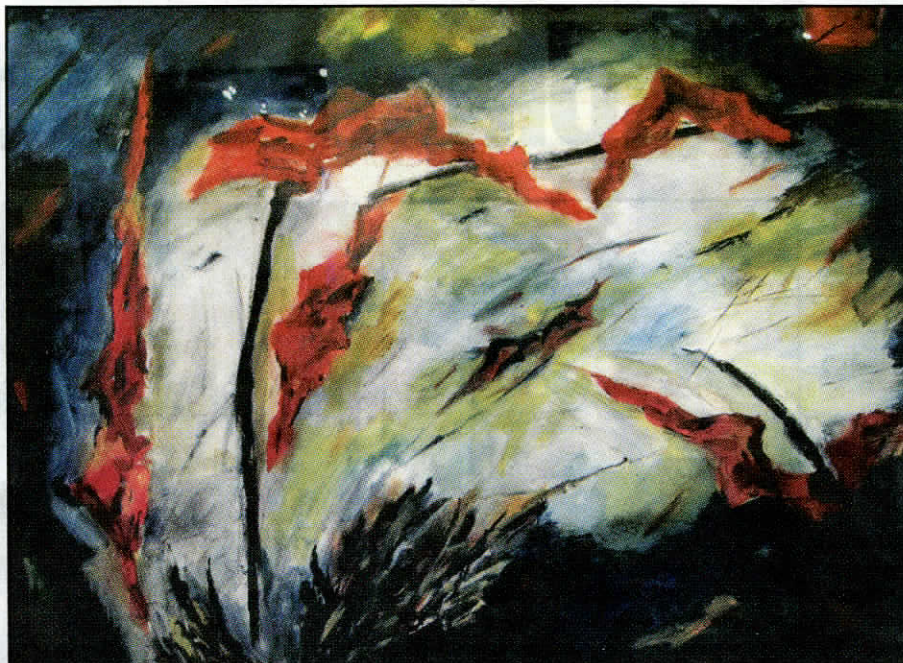
"From the title, she's obviously a fortune teller, but probably not in a storefront like you see in New York City," Pepich said.

"She's from a carnival of some kind, because she's wearing flashy attire. You can imagine seeing her in a sideshow."

But we've caught her in a moment in which she is reflective, expressing a sense of doubt, he said. The black background reinforces that with a series of large question marks.

"There's a sense of vulnerability about this woman that really pulls you in," Pepich said. "She's not saying, 'You're going to meet a tall, dark, handsome stranger.' It's almost as if she's just seen something in her mind that's giving her pause to stop and think."

"She's not looking at you directly, she's looking off to the side. She probably realizes you're here, but right now she's in another place."



"Painting the Light" is the title of this painting seen at left by Kenosha resident Carolyn Gagliardi. The piece won a merchandise award at the Wustum Museum in Racine.

KENOSHA NEWS PHOTOS  
BY BILL ROBBINS



This is a portion of a human-figure painting by Kenosha resident Rebecca Venn, which was juried into the "Watercolor Wisconsin" show.

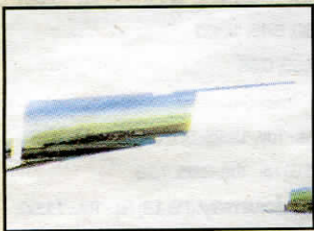


Kenosha resident Jil Wilson created this painting, titled "Imploring."



This painting, left, by Kenosha resident Jean Tenuta is titled "Roberto's Friend's View."





**"Point of View" by Salem resident Harry Wirth**

## Local artists well represented in exhibit

Four local artists won awards in this year's "Watercolor Wisconsin" show:

■ Salem resident Harry Wirth took first place and won a Wustum purchase award for his painting titled "Point of View."

■ Kenosha resident Amy Misurelli Sorensen won a merit award (honorable mention) for her painting titled "Warrior Cock Fighter."

■ Kenosha residents Carolyn Gagliardi and Helen Napier won merchandise awards, which include items such as art supplies. Gagliardi's piece is "Painting the Light"; Napier's piece is "The Tower."

An unusually large number of Kenosha County artists are represented in the prestigious exhibit this year, said Bruce Pepich, the museum's executive director and curator.

In all, 11 local artists were juried into the show.

Normally, the show features three or four Kenosha artists.

"If 11 is not a record, it's very close to it," Pepich said. "I think the reason is Kenosha and its surrounding communities — like Pleasant Prairie — are growing in population."

The other local artists are Don Hinrichs, Sande Jensen, Diane Levesque, Jean Tenuta, Rebecca Venn and Jil Wilson, all of Kenosha; and June Ambro of Pleasant Prairie.