

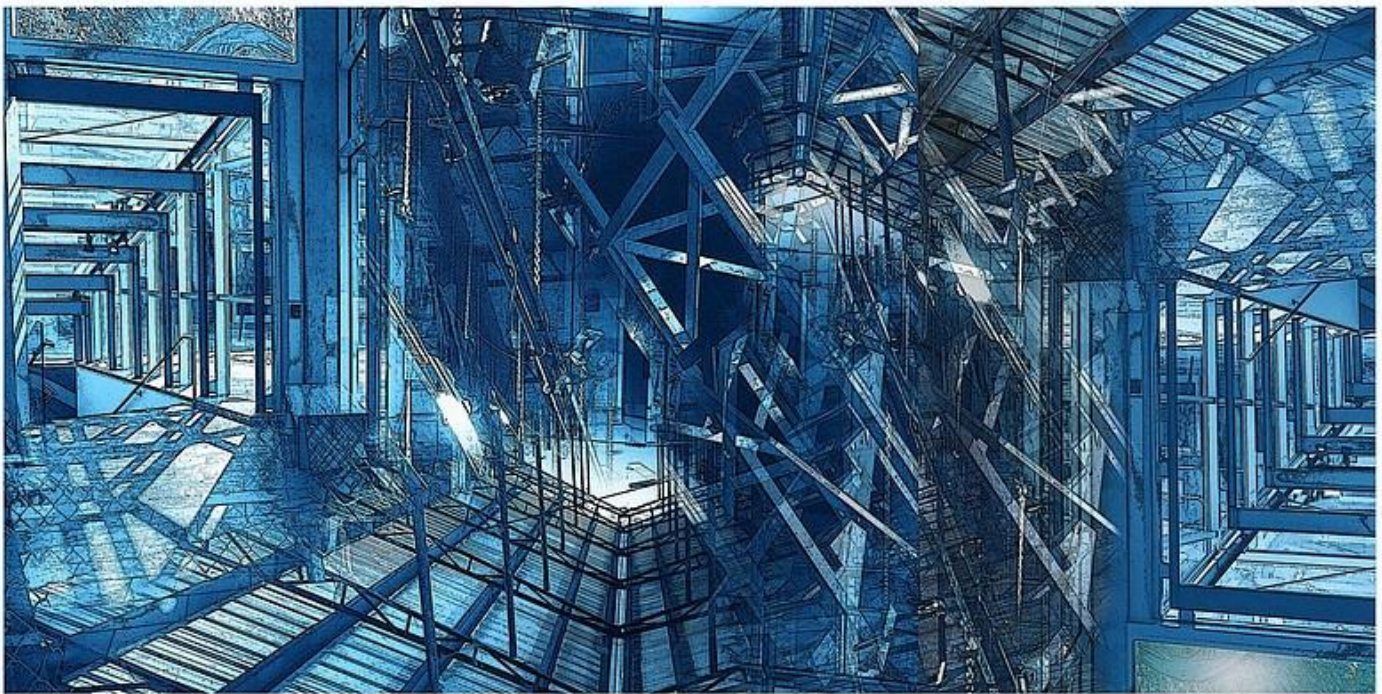


ART

Stationery art: Small Works on Paper exhibit cuts into current moment

January 13, 2022 at 1:31 a.m.

by [Sean Clancy](#)



“Blue Lines,” digitally manipulated photograph by Mike Means of El Dorado (Special to the Democrat-Gazette)

Even within its constraints, perhaps the most rewarding quality of the annual Small Works on Paper exhibit is its variety.

Artists, who are all members of the Arkansas Artist Registry, are limited in how large their works can be and to using paper as a support. But the exhibit, now in its 35th year and presented by the Arkansas Arts Council, is often a revelation in the way media is used under these restrictions.

Artist and juror Ronald Jackson, a Helena native who grew up in Marvell and who now lives in Fredericksburg, Va., sorted through more than 200 digital entries over the summer and has gathered a pleasing expanse of work that features photography, mixed media, silverpoint, drawing and painting. Among the 39 pieces are abstract works, hyper-realistic pieces, surrealistic images, social commentary and whimsy.

"It was challenging to eliminate some of the entries," says Jackson, whose 2019 painting "In a Day, She Became the Master of Her House" is part of the permanent collection at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville. "It was of interest to me to have the opportunity to observe the number of artists in Arkansas making work. That was inspiring, because growing up I knew of very few artists who were pursuing art outside of the occasional hobby."

The exhibit is up through Jan. 28 at Mosaic Templars Cultural Center in Little Rock.

Gallery: 2022 Small Works on Paper



THE PIECES

The works seem to be arranged thematically in the center's gallery. One grouping includes "Oranges in Marketplace" and "Jenna," a pair of moody, hand-painted

photographs by David Rackley of Russellville. "Jenna," which shows a woman curled up in a chair clutching what appears to be a blanket, is particularly striking in its atmosphere and yellow-ochre tone.

This section is bookended by two graphite drawings from Jason Powers of Ozark — "Interchange," an abstract that could be a view of a traffic grid from above and "Santa Barbara," a realist still life of an architectural element.

Speaking of graphite and realism, elsewhere in the gallery Crystal Jennings of Rison has two drawings, "Apocalyptic Thinking" and "This Is Not a Cloud," that showcase her skill with pencil. Both feature her finely rendered portraiture in graphite with childlike dinosaurs and clouds in colored pencil.

Other portraits include "Untitled" by Kiaya Luper of Van Buren, a small, expertly painted oil on paper; and one by Rashawn Penister of Pine Bluff, also called "Untitled," created with playing cards and acrylic.

The exhibit includes a showing of strong photographic works. "Covid Summer," by Margo Duvall of Little Rock, is amusing and haunting. At the center of the color image is a young child, relaxing in a small chair in a backyard as a fan of water shoots from a sprinkler. This undeniable cuteness is balanced by the two empty chairs on each side of the child and a shadow on the left that add a William Eggleston-type edge to the scene.

(Our only complaint of this presentation of the exhibit is that "Covid Summer" is hung too high for viewers, especially the height-challenged among us, to get a really close look.)

Like Duvall, Derek Slagle of Little Rock uses color wonderfully to capture a man seated behind a car engine in a garage in his "Untitled" photograph.

"Bailing," a black and white photo by Steve Flynn of Heber Springs, is pure action and movement, capturing a young man pushing himself away from his bicycle during what looks like a jump into a river or lake. It's a beautifully cropped image loaded with exuberance and joy even though the rider's face is obscured.

"I connected to the feelings of that, the narrative of a person experiencing life," Jackson says.



"Book Brothers 2," photograph, by Equilla Walker of Little Rock, won a Purchase Award in the 2022 Small Works on Paper exhibit. (Special to the Democrat-Gazette) SOME AWARD WINNERS

Equilla Walker's "Book Brothers 2," one of seven Purchase Award winners, is a charming back view of two young boys strolling down the sidewalk with their books.

Jan Waldon of Bentonville won two Purchase Awards for "June Wedding" and "Murse," in which she applies colorful embroidery to vintage postcards. Both pieces are fanciful and fun and successfully transform or complement the original image.

"They were so interesting," Jackson says. "They were done quite well, and they intrigue the viewer. You just say, 'wow.'"

Anna Zusman's three digital drawings — "Alice 2020," "Fair" and Purchase Award winner "Reflection" — feature intricate linework and mark-making to create worlds that could have come from a Victorian adventure novel (no surprise, of course, since one was inspired by "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"). "Fair," though, speaks directly to our pandemic times as a pair of masked young people stand outside a creepy, abandoned fairground.

The hazy, spidery marks of Lam Tze Sheung's pencil and silverpoint "Untitled" are intriguing. Her other work, also "Untitled," is a silverpoint and Chinese ink and is among the Purchase Award winners.

Maumelle's Dennis McCann makes another appearance in Small Works on Paper with "Flying Fish," a keenly designed watercolor that details a portion of the neon sign at the restaurant of the painting's title. McCann's ability with shadows and perspective gives an almost 3D feel to the picture.

Get up close to "P159-Face (white)," an abstract oil painting by Steven Wise of Rogers, to see the thick, uniform smears of paint that make up the image.

"Sunburn," an acrylic painting by Sigrid Lorfing of St. Joe, lives up to its title with a figure in a black bathing suit against a deep red background. One almost wants to hand the woman a bottle of sunscreen.

Almost all of the works are for sale, so the exhibit is not just a treat for viewers but collectors as well.

After it leaves Little Rock, Small Works on Paper will spend most of 2022 making its way around the state, with stops scheduled for Magnolia, Alma, Bentonville, Russellville, Pine Bluff, Searcy and West Memphis.

2022 Small Works on Paper

- **Where:** Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, 501 W. Ninth St., Little Rock
- **When:** Tuesday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. through Jan. 28.
- **Admission:** Free
- **Information:** (501) 683-3593