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Artists receive awards for *Creatures Wild and Wooly* exhibit at Florida CraftArt

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More than 35 artists from Florida, California and Chicago created pieces from ferocious dragon heads to wistful, wide-eyed ceramic rabbits and intricately beaded statement necklaces for Florida CraftArt's exhibition "Creatures Wild and Wooly." Awards were presented at the opening reception on June 30, attended by 250 art lovers.

The exhibition's judge was Michael Killoren, the new executive director of the Morean Arts Center. "The works are so imaginative with gorgeous detail," he says of the first-place winner Marilyn Rackleman's mixed-media sculpture which sold to a collector at the opening. I love the narrative on Vadim Malkin's 'The Joy Ride,' he adds. "There are layers of meaning, and the craftsmanship is beautiful."

'The Joy Ride' won third place and is a playful 27-inch tall ceramic sculpture of a cow balancing a pig on its back, who has a mouse on his head.

The national juried exhibition showcases 74 works of original art based on creatures—wild, exotic, domestic, imaginary and mythical. Best of show was given to Diane Lublinski of Pembroke Pines for "Remember Your Path," an intense, dramatic ceramic sculpture measuring nearly four-feet high.

Second place went to Ray Bennett of Riverview, Florida, for a terrifying dragon-head trophy he sculpted in papier mâché, clay and mixed media. "I wanted to capture the essence of a dragon through sculpture, and needed them to look as lifelike as possible," he says. "I want you to feel like one of these dragons will take a snap at you."

Honorable mentions were awarded to Sarasota artist Taylor Robenalt for 'The Wall of Lies Between Us,' and St. Petersburg artists Alicia Diem for 'My home is my castle,' and Chomick + Meder for 'Avine Degas.'

The exhibition's entry is framed by a magical portal arch, entitled "Fiber Forest," that was created by Roseline Young and Marci Mills, and other fiber artists from the Ft. Myers, Cape Coral area.

"People are amazed at the wild and imaginative creatures, as well as an almost life-size realistic male lion created from agave fiber by Anne Andersson. It makes people stop in their tracks outside our window," says Executive Director, Katie Deits. "Adults and children both will enjoy our programming such as docent tours at 1:15 p.m. on Wednesdays, rock-painting workshops and creature-inspired dramatic readings."

"We are pleased to **dedicate** this exhibition to the memory of the late sculptor **Paul Eppling** who was a Florida CraftArt artist," says Liz Rogers, Gallery Manager. "His whimsical, magical creatures fashioned from auto parts, farm machinery, blown glass or discarded metal scraps can be seen around St. Petersburg in parks and on top of the city's maintenance building."

The exhibit will run through August 12 with a closing reception, People's Choice Awards and special appearances by **Southeastern Guide Dogs**. Other events during the exhibition are rock-painting workshops and a writing class and dramatic readings with Keep St. Pete Lit.

For more information, visit www.FloridaCraftArt.org or call (727) 821-7391. The gallery and exhibition admission is free. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Florida CraftArt located at 501 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization founded in 1951 and headquartered in St. Petersburg. Its mission is to grow the statewide creative economy by engaging the community and advancing Florida's fine craft artists and their work. Fine craft art is presented in the 2,500-square-foot retail gallery and a large gallery features curated exhibitions. ArtLofts is on the second floor and features 19 working artists' studios. Florida CraftArt is the *only* statewide organization offering artists a platform to show and sell their work.

SIDEBAR

June 30 to August 12, 2017 This exciting juried exhibition of original artwork by more than 35 artists showcases work based on creatures-wild, exotic, domesticated, imaginary and mythical. This exhibition is dedicated to the late sculptor Paul Eppling who created amazing wild creatures.

Docent Tours: Wednesdays at 1:15 p.m. Group tours by appointment.

July 8, 22, 29: Learn to paint creatures on rocks (materials are provided): \$5. Space is limited. Register on FloridaCraftArt.org or call (727) 821-7391.

Sat., July 15, 1 to 3 p.m. Writing class inspired by the exhibition with Keep St. Pete Lit \$10.

Writing from the class to be performed on Sat., August 5. Register on KeepStPeteLit.org.

Sat., August 5, 5:30 p.m. Keep St. Pete Lit's Ekphrastic where 12 visual art pieces are interpreted by a dozen local writers, presented in dramatic readings.

Sat., August 12, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Closing reception and People's Choice Award presentation. Meet Southeastern Guide Dogs and the Superheroes making an impact on our community.

Second Saturday ArtWalk - open until 9 p.m.

CUTLINES (Many more images of work available on request. Photo and video opportunities available.)

Kathryn Howd, Diane Lublinski, Marilyn Rackleman, Ray Bennett, Alicia Diem and Michael Killoren.jpg

Florida CraftArt Board President Kathryn Howd (left) with judge Michael Killoren (far right) and award winners Diane Lublinski (Best of Show), Marilyn Rackelman (First Place), Ray Bennett (Second Place) and Alicia Diem (Honorable Mention). Not pictured are Honorable Mention winners Taylor Robenalt and Chomick + Meder.

Diane Lublinski - Best of Show-Remember Your Path.jpg

Diane Lublinski won Best of Show for her 4-foot-tall sculpture, 'Remember Your Path.'

Rackleman, Marilyn Vivian full.jpg

'Vivian' by Winter Haven artist Marilyn Rackleman is a sculpture created out of clay, copper, metal mesh, acrylic stains and glaze.

Ray Bennett - Second Place-Dragon Trophy.jpg

Ray Bennett of Riverview, Florida, received Second Place for his 'Black Dragon Trophy,' a 16" x 14" x 18" sculpture of papier mâché and mixed media.

Alicia Diem-My Home is My Castle.jpg

Alicia Diem received an honorable mention for 'My Home is My Castle.'

AnneAndersson created the lion from agave fibers.jpg

It's a show stopper: Peering out of Florida CraftArt's picture window is this life-size line created in agave fibers by St. Petersburg artist Anne Andersson. Her dedication is to conservationist ideals and her goal is to preserve these species in the wild. Andersson's animals are highly sought after by collectors. She created a white Bengal tiger family, commissioned by Siegfried and Roy, to be displayed at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her African lions were featured at the grand opening of the Fine Arts Gallery at the MGM Grand Hotel. Her Siberian tigers and African lions are on display at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida.

Malkin_Vadim-The JoyRide.jpg

Visitors can't help smiling when they see the ceramic sculpture 'The Joy Ride' by Orlando artist Vadim Malkin who received Third Place for artwork.