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SAMA features 'Women in Art': All-female artists works' on display

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Several regional artists have works included in "Women in Art: Selections from the Permanent Collection" at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art's permanent collection.

The museum will close for the holidays but will reopen Jan. 2.

The exhibit runs through Jan. 18 along with a companion exhibition entitled "Sacred Sisters," by Holly Trostle Brigham.

"We had Holly's exhibition scheduled and we thought it was a perfect time to showcase the female artists in our permanent collection," said Jess Campbell, education coordinator for the museum, which is located on the campus of Saint Francis University.

The permanent collection consists of nearly 5,000 works of art. In addition to Loretto, SAMA has locations in Altoona, Bedford, Johnstown and Ligonier. Both exhibitions, and the permanent collection overall, support the museum's mission of showcasing the regional art of Pennsylvania as well as American art.

"I wanted to showcase items I hadn't seen before or hadn't been exhibited in a while," she said.

According to Trostle Brigham, all-female artists showings are a trend going into 2020. This is collaborated by a November article in The Art Newspaper citing "grass roots" efforts by the Feminist Art Coalition to promote "women-first exhibitions, performances and programmes in

autumn 2020" at more than 50 museums to coincide with the U.S. presidential election. Additionally, The Baltimore Museum of Art has declared it will only buy artwork by women artists.

"Typically, exhibits by women occur at a regular time of year, such as during breast cancer awareness month or women in history month," Trostle Brigham said.

In "Sacred Sisters," the Philadelphia artist said she "wanted to give these women more of a voice. These are historical figures that the average person doesn't know about or has ever heard about and these women did amazing things. I wanted to give them more of a voice."

The exhibition "Women in Art" showcases the works of Colleen Browning, Eleanor Zyglar, Carole A. Feuerman, Joyce Korotkin. Area residents will recognize the names of prominent artists with local connections such as Lynn Baney, Helen Gorsuch, Loa Joan Stern, Judith Counsel Vipond and SAMA's own Barbara Hollander, who serves as coordinator at SAMA-Altoona.

"I get inspiration from the multitudes of artists I come in contact with locally and globally, but mostly from the world around me," Hollander said. "I try to be aware of the seasons and the sky, mountains and the ocean. For 'Diamond Jubilee,' I wanted to show the invisible force of nature and the raw power of the cosmos."

Judith Counsel Vipond of Hollidaysburg has been painting in a variety of mediums and styles since she first became interested in art while visiting her bachelor uncle Frederick Counsel. Counsel who traveled worldwide always returned to Altoona, his niece said.

"Origins II," one of two works Counsel Vipond has in the exhibition, is done as a mixed medium of acrylics and collage. "They are very old works," she said, "I painted them about 1995."

However, the subject matter for "Origins II" and "Choices" arose from the same "timeless," creative well.

"They are both about humanity, the cycle of life and the mystery of life," she said.: It's about humanity. The cycle of life and the mystery of life."

A rather foreboding work, "Origins II" has multiple skulls and dark colors which represent the "difficulties of living life. The message is timeless," she said. But as the viewer's eyes move up, a "peaceful blue mountain rises on the horizon against an off-white sky."

The tranquil blue mountain and sky express "hope for the future or the hope for an afterlife. Most of humanity believes that there is another peaceful life beyond this experience," she said.

For Gorsuch, inspiration for her Raku-fired clay piece "Hathor," came from a previous trip to Egypt, where the ancient civilization represented childbirth and womanhood through hippopotamus. "Hethor," features a cow's face on a nude woman who is riding on a hippo, and is associated with childbirth in Egyptian culture. Gorsuch used the Japanese firing technique of Raku to produce the brilliant colors and "crackled" appearance in the piece.

"They've done such a lovely job with the entire exhibition," she said. "I was so happy to see her on display. It's like seeing an old friend."