

U-M exhibit gets visitors thinking about aging

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As quoted in the display for "Aging with Attitude," Eleanor Roosevelt says it best: "Beautiful young people are an accident of nature, but beautiful old people are a work of art."

There's a lot of beautiful art in this show organized by Washtenaw County's Blueprint for Aging collaborative at the University of Michigan's Jean Paul Slusser Gallery. The exhibit features 70 artworks crafted by 50 regional artists "reflecting the diversity of aging as an experience, a concept, and a cultural phenomenon."

As Blueprint for Aging director Jill Kind reminds us, "In less than 25 years, the entire nation will be more 'gray' than Florida is right now. Our goal with this show is to get folks thinking about aging on a broader level than is often the case."

The images at the Slusser Gallery show us artists defining age in an almost infinite variety of ways with works in turn wry, bemused, patient and wise - with very little rancor or bitterness. A few of these works take pointed aim at current politics and social policy, but even they have a bemused forbearance.

Photographer Susan Finley's "Our Last Talk" poignantly captures, as she tells us on the photo's gallery card, "the end of my mother's life when she was trying hard to recapture and share her life's memories with me." Helen Redman's "Imaging my Crone" color drawing creates an imaginary approximation of what she thinks she'll look like in her later years.

Susan Krause, has contributed a 17-part latex rubber body casting mold "Linear Series" hanging off the Slusser walls that documents prosthetics she calls "tactile portraiture." And Anne Percy Knott's dyed silk and wax linen "A Matter of Time" documents 67 years on a wall-mounted fabric where slash marks denote the fading of time amid rust.

Yet perhaps the most moving of all the art on display is Eastern Michigan University art professor Brooks Harris Stevens' heartfelt "I know you hear me but are you Listening?" This wall-mounted installation appears initially like a flock of white birds taking flight, but it's actually more than two hundred life-sized plaster ears casting toward the Slusser ceiling. Stevens' visual plea is a plaintive, practical concern about aging that speaks much louder than words.

"Aging with Attitude" will continue through March 28 at the University of Michigan Jean Paul Slusser Gallery, 2000 Bonisteel Blvd. Gallery hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday -Friday and noon-7 p.m. Saturday. For information, call 734-936-2082.

Ann Arbor News Review of exhibit, by John Carlos Cantu:

<http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/annarbornews/index.ssf?/base/features-2/1205649655202600.xml&coll=2>

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