



Valley News Dispatch

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TICKET



Autumn's End,
by Bob Bickers
18 x 24, oil on canvas,
2006

Adventures on canvas

Penn State New Kensington showcases local artists. Pages 6-7

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▶ Lower Burrell churches band together for charity. **Page 16**

On the cover:

Entries in the East Suburban Artists League's annual show (clockwise from upper left): wood rendering by Ted Scanga, of Lower Burrell, and paintings by Susan Foster, of Murrysville; Bob Bickers, of Murrysville; and Dorcas Deformo, of Kiski Township.

ADVENTURES

Penn State New Ken showcases the works of Alle-Kiski Valley artists

East Suburban Artists League's annual show

When: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. weekdays; noon-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, through Jan. 5

Where: Art gallery at Penn State New Kensington, Upper Burrell

Admission: Free

Details: 724-334-6004

Reception: A free meet-the-artists reception in the gallery is 7-9 p.m. Friday

By Rex Rutkoski
VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH

It's not so much about motivation when it comes to art, Al Owcar says.

"It's more of an obsession," explains the Lower Burrell man, one of the many Alle-Kiski Valley residents exhibiting their work this month at the East Suburban Artists League's annual show at Penn State New Kensington, Upper Burrell.

It continues through Jan. 5. A free meet-the-artists reception will be from 7-9 p.m. Friday in the gallery.

Owcar, who works in oils on canvas and colored pencil on illustration board, says he always has the beginnings of several paintings running through his mind, day and night. Sometimes an idea will germinate

for years before it finds its way onto a canvas.

"I will not start a painting until I have it completed in my mind, and even then I will make changes as I paint," he explains. He says he has never done a drawing or a painting without changing it before it was completed.

He is represented in the exhibit with an oil painting, a snow scene he calls "A Gathering of Eagles," and a colored-pencil drawing of white peonies, titled "Ants in My Plants."

The flowers are from a friend's garden in Allegheny Township, he says. He likes to place a bird or insect in all of his florals.

The snow scene, Owcar says, was a figment of his imagination. "It satisfies me when people say that they know where the place is that I

Painted, when in fact I had composed it in my mind," he adds, smiling.

Art has an increasing importance to him these days as he deals with health problems. He has had to give up golf and some other activities.

He always has been drawn to landscapes as subject matter because of his love of nature and the outdoors. Now that art provides a source of vicarious experience.

"Since my health doesn't allow me to travel much anymore, I rely on my imagination and the generosity of my friends in allowing me to use some of their photographs to compose my paintings," he says.

Sylvia Fantozzi, of Lower Burrell, finds artistic satisfaction in traveling as short a distance as Memorial Park in New Kensington.

"My family spends a lot of time at



Steven Dietz/For the Valley News Dispatch

Artist Al Owcar will exhibit some of his oil paintings in the East Suburban Artists League's annual show at Penn State New Kensington, Upper Burrell.

ON CANVAS

the park. We think it is one of the jewels of the area," she says. She loves to take her sketch pad and her grandchildren.

She has two watercolors of the park in the Penn State show. "I paint ordinary objects and local scenes, nothing glamorous, but I hope my renderings of them show their beauty," Fantozzi says. "I hope people feel the love I have for each subject."

Gary Bills, of Plum, seeks to usher viewers into a different world, if only for a moment, through his artistic expression. He appreciates that, in art, "You can put your heart and soul in something that evokes so much emotional reaction." He loves to tell a story though what he creates.

Bills works in black pencil, wood carving and, for this exhibit, photography. He has hung two photos from a trip he took to Nova Scotia in August.

His art also is being showcased this month at the Murrysville Municipal building.

Ted Scanga, of Lower Burrell, does not do many shows but finds the Penn State gallery an excellent space in which to present art.

Visitors will see his renderings in wood of an elk and an egret he "met" in Yellowstone Park and the Outer Banks, respectively. "I hope people see some beauty and feel some joy at what they see, and I want to convey that art is for everyone, not just the masters," he says.

In art, he says he is drawn to the challenge "to see if I can do it." He is grateful for the opportunity to change something in the way he would like to see it.

"Art makes you see things that you do not normally see," he adds.

Ed Straub, of Murrysville, president of the East Suburban Artists, sees art's possibilities through a lens of realism. "I try to make my paintings realistic-looking. Since I didn't have any formal training in art, I am self-taught from observing, reading and what I learn



Lower Burrell artist Sylvia Fantozzi's watercolor depiction of Memorial Park in New Kensington.

through the Artists League," he explains.

An oil he completed this summer, "Sunset at Island Lake," set in the mountainous back country of Wyoming, is in the exhibit.

Susan Foster, of Murrysville, a nationally recognized painter, shows her depiction of a cottage window and a barn in her two watercolor entries in the show.

Her work is realistic, but she tries to find something unique to convey about her subjects. "My hope is to relay these ideas to the viewer, to cause the viewer to see the 'ordinary' in a new light," she explains.

The past president of the Artists

League says that, for as long as she can remember, she has picked up a pencil or brush and tried to record what she saw.

"I have explored the world around me in that way," Foster says. "In that respect, I don't feel that I chose to do art. It has always been a part of me.

"The deeper I get into my work, the more I realize that I am exploring realities. The more I paint, the more excited I become about my discoveries and the connectedness of everything."

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Paintings by Gary Bills (far left), of Plum, and Lucy Slezycy (left) are featured in the East Suburban Artists League annual show at the art gallery at Penn State New Kensington, Upper Burrell.