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Melding two into one | Art exhibit combines pastels and watercolors

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A diverse collection of paintings encompassing art movements from abstract to realism is on display at a local gallery.

“From Charles Burchfield to Peter Adams: Watercolors and Pastels from the Permanent Collection” will be exhibited through Sept. 14 in the Margery Wolf-Kuhn gallery at Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto, on the campus of St. Francis University.

The show will feature 55 works by 41 artists, including local and regional artists, said Bobby Moore, interim curator.

Watercolor is valued for its transparent, fluid and luminescent properties while pastel combines the line of drawing with the color of painting to produce a vibrancy not readily found in other media, she explained.

“Pastel is used like watercolor for softness, so I grouped the two together,” Moore said. “We have an outstanding collection, and I thought it was time we combined them and shared them with the public.”

The artists in the title of the exhibit were chosen by Moore because they are more well-known.

Adams, of California, will have four pastels in the exhibit – “Sunset Over Carmel Rocks,” “Crystal Crag Over Lake Mary,” “Sunrise Over the San Gabriel Mountains” and “Evening Light from Hermit Trail, Grand Canyon.”

He is considered to be one of the foremost contemporary plein-air artists.

His “Sunrise Over the San Gabriel Mountains” features bright colors and luminous glow.

Burchfield will have two watercolors, “The Lonely Chimney” and “Hump Operations, Altoona,” in the show.

Burchfield was best known for his romantic, often fantastic depictions of nature.

He developed a unique style of watercolor painting that reflected American subjects and his profound respect for nature.

“Hump Operations, Altoona” is a 1936 watercolor depicting the Pennsylvania Railroad yard in Altoona.

“I’m familiar with the collection, and I think I used almost every pastel,” said Moore, who has worked at the museum for more than 14 years and was named interim curator in early March.

Moore had to consider a painting’s subject and size and then work the painting into the space available when choosing pieces for this exhibit.

“They (paintings) cover all the art movements – realism, contemporary romanticism, neo-expressionism, abstractionism and surrealism,” Moore said.

Moore added that while some might think of watercolors and pastels as employing soft colors, some paintings in the exhibit use bold colors.

Gary Moyer, the museum’s executive director, mentioned some of the artists’ strong local ties.

“Michael Strueber of Hollidaysburg is director emeritus of the museum,” Moyer said. “And there’s Frederick Alan Counsel of Altoona and Barbara Strank Zivkovich of Johnstown.”

Strueber’s two watercolors are “Tropical Inversion” and “Swamp Sensation.”

In his artist’s statement, Strueber talks about a lifetime spent in the area:

“I was born, raised, educated and inspired by a lifetime spent in western Pennsylvania. Daily, I explored the hills, creeks, valleys and meadows directly accessible to my home.”

He also tells about painting becoming the dominate focus rather than the scene or still life he is working on.

“Technically, I do not pursue preliminary sketches because I want my paintings to be a direct response to what I see and feel. Drawing is kept to a few simple contour lines so that the act of painting dominates the process.”

Moyer said his favorite painting in the exhibit is “Night Spirit,” a pastel by Donna Levinstone.

“It’s a night scene that looks like a photograph,” Moyer said.

“This is a diverse collection with something to interest everyone. Patrons will find it pleasing to the eye as well as the spirit of the artist in all of us.”

Counsel, who died in 1978, has four watercolors from the 1930s in the exhibit – “Kenne-bunk Church, Maine,” “Babel,” “Spring” and “Blue Hills, Pennsylvania.”

Zivkovich, who was inducted posthumously into the Artists’ Hall of Fame in 2007, has one watercolor, “U.S. Steel.”

Another local artist in the exhibit is Edward J. Burda of Portage, whose watercolor “Rhino” is featured.

Burda is an art teacher at St. Benedict School in Carrolltown and an adjunct faculty member at Mount Aloysius College, Cresson.

In his artist’s statement, Burda speaks about art being an adventure created by the artist.

“My paintings are a personal record of my experiences and emotions. My adventure with them will not be the same as yours.”

Other pastels are “Surf Near Little Sur” by Gil Dellinger; “Warmth of Winter” by Susan Nicholas Gephart; “Tonto Mountain” by Albert Handell; “Blue Moment, Sierras,” “Sierra Autumn” and “San Gabriel Peaks” by Amy Karl; “Sierra Moraine” by Theodore Lukits; “Sour Magenta” by Wolf Kahn; “Evening Ramble” by Clark Mitchell; and “Autumn Respite” by Gene Sparkman.

Other watercolor artists are David Armstrong, Willie Lee Atkyns, Thomas Hart Benton, Robert L. Bowden, Frank Cason, Robert J. Cronauer, Adolf Dehn, Patricia Tobacco Forrester, William Gropper, Johanna Knowles Woodwell Hailman, Edgar Imler, Paul Jenkins, Bob Paul Kane, Arthur LaMay, Don Nice, Eliot O’Hara, David Porter, Gertrude Quastler, Charlotte Ramseyer, Richard Segalman, Bradley Shoemaker, Wallace Herndon Smith and Nat Youngblood.

Exhibition

What: “From Charles Burchfield to Peter Adams: Watercolors and Pastels from the Permanent Collection.”

When: Through Sept. 14.

Where: Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto, St. Francis University.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays; 1 to 5 p.m. on weekends.

Information: 472-3920.