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Watercolor Wisconsin 2015 tells many stories

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Graphic illustration by Dan Talsky, danie.talsky@journaltimes.com; photos by Jon Bolton; paintings, left to right: "Remembering," by Sue Horton; "Parked," by Karen Mathis; "Brian," by Rebecca Venn; and "Saturday Morning Market," by

January 13, 2016 10:00 pm • [LEE B. ROBERTS](#) lee.roberts@journaltimes.com

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There was just something about the bounty of colorful flowers and the woman standing among them, turned away from the camera, holding a bouquet up high that caught Carlotta Miller's attention.

"It just grabbed me," Miller said of the scene she photographed one Saturday morning at Kenosha's HarborMarket.

If You Go

WHAT: Watercolor Wisconsin 2015

WHEN: Now through April 23.
Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday (closed Sundays, Mondays, federal holidays and Easter).

WHERE: Wustum Museum of Fine

when she entered her painting in the Watercolor Wisconsin 2015 show, it was not only juried into the exhibition, but chosen for two awards. Miller's "Saturday Morning

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Market" took the First Award and one of two memorial purchase awards — the Joan M. Spinks Award — in the show, which is on display at the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, 2519 Northwestern Ave., through April 23.

Miller said she used a more nontraditional watercolor technique of pouring the color onto the paper to create the desired effect (some brush techniques were also used). She'd begun working with pouring techniques after attending a workshop, and found she liked the element of surprise that pouring color provided. The surprise element is also something she appreciates about her previous work as a printmaker, said the retired art teacher who taught at Kenosha's Bradford High School and now works in the Racine Business Center's 16th Street Studios (<http://16thststudio.tumblr.com>).

Whether she's working with watercolors or prints, Miller said it is the process involved in creating art that she really enjoys. She is very thankful, she said, to the Racine Art Museum for providing the space and opportunity for the annual Watercolor Wisconsin show, which highlights the work of "so many wonderfully, talented people" from throughout the state.

"When I looked around the room that my painting is in, I was just awestruck by the other work there," she said. "It is all so beautiful."

Stories told

Sue Horton — another Watercolor Wisconsin 2015 winner — echoed Miller's thoughts about the show and fellow exhibitors, saying she was both humbled and surprised to have her work chosen for an award.

The Franksville-based artist earned the exhibition's Third Award with her realistic portrait of a Civil War re-enactor, titled "Remembering." It is one of two re-enactor portraits Horton has hanging in the show (the other is titled "Holding On to a Cause"), both of which were inspired by photographs her husband, Dan, shot at a Civil War re-enactment on the East Coast last year that commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Surrender at Appomattox.

While Horton has been creating art ever since she can remember, portraits are fairly new subject matter for the retired nurse who began working in watercolors when she and her husband lived in England for two years. Prior to that, Horton worked in a variety of other media, and many of her paintings before portraits focused on landscapes.

"I was a little nervous to start doing portraits because I knew how difficult they could be," she said.

Having taken classes at Wustum with local artist Jean Thielen — as well as workshops with master portrait painters in Kenosha — Horton developed her portrait skills enough to win a merit award in Watercolor Wisconsin 2013 with a portrait of her oldest granddaughter holding a frog.

"What's fun for me, in doing portraits, is that I love to tell a story," she said.

And the story Horton aims to tell with her pieces in this Watercolor Wisconsin show is that of Civil War soldiers.

"I try to capture a moment in time — perhaps a moment of reflection (as in 'Remembering') or a moment of childhood — a sad or happy moment, one that each of us may have felt during our lives," she said.

Having focused on watercolors for about 10 years now, Horton said she can't see herself going back to other media.

"I'm in love with it," she said. "It's a really exciting medium — spontaneous and fresh. There are always new challenges with it and I learn something with every single painting I do."

Realistic and abstract

Miller's and Horton's paintings are among 117 works of art, by 94 Wisconsin artists, chosen for Watercolor Wisconsin 2015, by jurors Byron Roche, an art dealer and former owner of Chicago's Roche Gallery, and Scott Ashley, artist and associate director of Chicago's Perimeter Gallery Inc. The jurors chose the works from among 301 pieces submitted by 170 artists from throughout the state. Ney Tait Fraser's "Yellow Eyes" earned the Second Award, and the Judi Flegel Memorial Purchase Award went to Sue Wolff for her "Lilies I."

Subject matter for this show includes everything from more traditional still life images and landscapes to animals, flowers, figure studies, social commentary, religious themes and more — expressed in abstract and realistic styles. Both two- and three-dimensional work is featured, using a variety of water-based media. And, in some cases, viewers can see two very different works of art, created by the same artist.

Other Racine County artists whose work is exhibited in Watercolor Wisconsin 2015 are: Regina Baker, Kristen Bartel, Doris Beaudry, Jerry Belland, Richard Berns, Christine Bohn, Karen Brittain, Caye Christensen, Margo Cuisinier, Doug DeVinny, Deedee Dumont, Lisa Englander, Maureen Fritchen, Nancy Greenebaum, Edwin C. Kalke, Jessica Larsen, Deborah Madigan, Marilyn McGoldrick, John Nowicki, Lyle Peters, Don Ricchio, David Saaski, Edith Soghomonian, Susan M. Sorenson, Ginny Sullivan, Jan Thompson, Maggie Venn, Kelly Witte and Sue Wolff, all of Racine; Geri Brady, Gillian Graffy and David Jewell, all of Burlington; Nancy Neider, of Caledonia; Robert W. Andersen and Karen Mathis, of Caledonia; and Norman Abplanalp, Linda Gerard Dzik and Edith Kubicek, all of Waterford.

The Wustum Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is free. For more information, go to www.ramart.org or call 262-636-9177.

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