

Wustum show captures 'Wisconsin Photography 2009'

BY BILL ROBBINS

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RACINE — A juried show of works by Wisconsin art photographers — including one from Kenosha — boasts a broad spectrum of subjects and perspectives, including landscapes, portraits, still-lives and near-abstracts.

The Wustum Museum of Fine Arts' "Wisconsin Photography 2009" show features 90 pieces by 45 state photographers.

This is the first year the show accepted entries via e-mail, said Museum Director Bruce Pepich. That spurred an unusually large number of applications, he said.

"Still, we had to see the finished product before we ultimately accepted it into the show," Pepich said. "The quality of the printed image when you see it in its physical presence is of paramount importance."

Of the 761 pieces submitted by 78 artists, fewer than a quarter were chosen for this year's show, juried by Rod Slemmons.

Slemmons is executive director of the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College in Chicago.

"It's a very broad show, and we expected that because Rod runs one of the



"Soft Tulips" by Linda Schwam Merkel

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biggest photography institutions in the Midwest," Pepich said. "Columbia College is known for its course offerings in photography as well as film and video.

He's been a curator in the photography area for quite a bit of his career."

Curators and teachers are often sought-after as art jurors, Pepich said.

"They have experience in looking at large quantities of work and are able to make concise, decisive selections," Pepich said. "And Rod has certainly done that here."

The show features work by people of many ages.

"It has brought in a lot of young talent and emerging artists, along with people who are well-established," Pepich said. "In that respect, it's multi-generational."

Kenosha resident Paul Brnak has two small black-and-white photos — silver gelatin prints — in the show, both with winter themes.

"Burrberry" depicts a tangle of thorny bush branches amid a glossy blanket of snow.

An accompanying, untitled work

If you go

■ **What:** "Wisconsin Photography 2009," a show of works by photographers around the state

■ **Where:** Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, 2519 Northwestern Ave. in Racine

■ **When:** Through Nov. 28. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

■ **Admission:** Free and open to the public

■ **More information:** Call 262-636-9177

shows a slender, leafless tree on a horizon, with a smooth expanse of snow in the foreground and a white-gray sky in the background.

Both pieces are framed in broad white matting, which enhances a sense of snowy purity contrasted by the rough-hewn natural objects.

Erv Schroeder, of Oshkosh, has an evocative, nearly abstract black-and-white piece titled "Time Portal 2," which is a digital archive ink-jet print.

An image of what could be skeletal remnants of an animal — perhaps a skull — dominates the frame. Through a large oval space in the formation, the viewer can discern a blurry sky and landscape.

Indeed, it's as if one is peering back to the time the animal roamed that terrain.

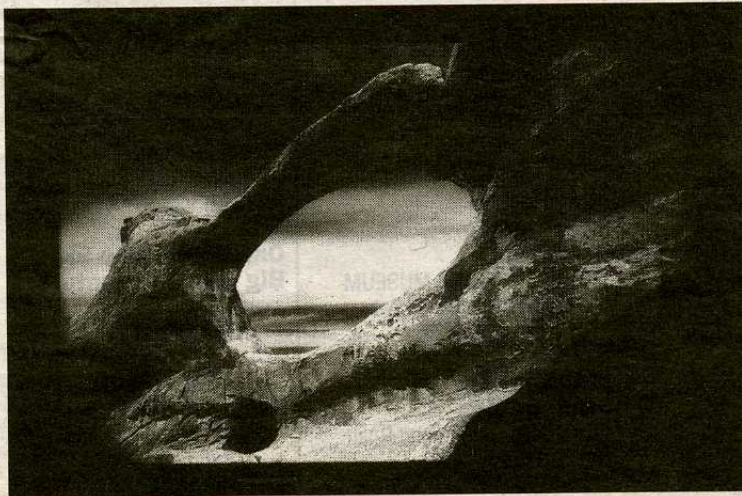
The piece features stark contrasts in light, with a portion nearly luminous amid a deep border of black.

Robert W. Baron, of New Berlin, has an intriguingly composed piece, "Vienna Chef," a color digital ink-jet print showing a hat-clad chef viewed from one window into another.

The low-angle perspective was shot from behind a lead-glass-lined window



"Vienna Chef" by Robert W. Baron



"Time Portal" by Erv Schroeder

PHOTOS: In Wustum show

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looking up at the chef, who apparently is leaning into his work, framed by a set of windows in a building across the way.

The piece has a distinctly European, well, flavor, and is highlighted by the dark, curved lines of the leaded glass and the brightness of the building in view, with its rectangular windows.

The chef, although ostensibly the primary visual subject,

is tantalizingly shielded from view, with only a portion of his head showing.

Linda Schwam Merkel, of Whitefish Bay, is represented by her gorgeous still-life titled "Soft Tulips," a color archival ink-jet print.

The piece expresses, with visual eloquence, the soft and fragile surfaces of several tulip blossoms in close-up.

A bright yellow and fully bloomed tulip dominates the center of the frame.