

STUDIO MONTCLAIR HOLDS 'STATE OF THE ART 2017'

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'College Tour' by Kate Albright is part of Studio Montclair's 'State of the Art 2017' exhibit. IMAGE COURTESY OF STUDIO MONTCLAIR.

By GWEN OREL

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“Hello!” “Good to see you!” and “Where’s yours?” were the white noise of the opening reception of Studio Montclair’s “State of the Art” exhibit last month, along with “Which one is yours, Mommy?”

The show, which runs through Friday, April 14, includes 80 works, in collage, photography, tempera paintings and other media, on display on two floors of Academy Square. Unlike other SMI shows, this show has no theme. The members select two pieces to submit, and jurors Virginia Schaffer Block (whose name graces one of the galleries at Academy Square) and April Tracey selected which to exhibit.

The fact that the artists were guaranteed the exhibit as part of their paid membership doesn’t lessen the quality at all, possibly because artists who join SMI, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1996, are already serious about their work. The organization has more than 350 members, from all over the country. SMI’s next exhibit, “Healing Through Art,” will run April 2-29 at the Montclair Public Library.

Montclair resident Ted Papoulas, whose children’s book “The Sound of All Things,” with text by Myron Uhlberg, was released in 2016, displayed a painting titled “Mother’s Day at the Amusement Park.” It’s an early piece, Papoulas said in an email, and it’s nice to have it up in his relatively new home town. The piece, which depicts a family on the Drop Zone ride at Bowcraft amusement park in Scotch Plains, is one of the few pieces featuring a New Jersey location, he said.

Eric Levin, deputy editor and dining editor of New Jersey Monthly, has been a member of SMI for 12 years. He has shown his work professionally in several galleries. Levin said at the opening reception that SMI “has been really an anchor for me as a photographer in terms of a place to show my work, to meet other artists, get and give feedback. It’s only gotten better over the years.

“It’s been particularly good because we have a little photo critique group Yvette and most of the photographers go to,” Levin said, referring to Yvette Lucas, one of SMI’s communications coordinators. The group meets every few weeks, he said. “It’s another wonderful thing I wouldn’t have if not for Studio Montclair.”

Levin, significantly, did not have a piece in the exhibit. He showed up not to show off, but to support his friends, and see what other artists were doing.

Marlene Hendria of Glen Ridge also didn’t have a piece in the show — this time. Hendria said she recently joined SMI on the recommendation of Judy Gould, her printmaking teacher at the Montclair Art Museum.





Arthur Paxton stands with his image, 'Looking Away from 80,000 Names.'

PHOTO BY GWEN OREL

Montclairite Arthur Paxton had a colorful image in the show that has a darker message. His photograph, "Looking Away from 80,000 Names," is a view from a window in Prague of Pinkas Synagogue, which is now the Holocaust Memorial in that city. The temple, Paxton said, memorializes the names of 80,000 Czech Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. "It's a very beautiful, but rather austere building," said Paxton, who took the photograph in November.

"What moved me was the balance of colors, in harmony. I liked the distortions you get through the glass." He manipulated the image in parts so that it looks blurry, almost like a drawing. "I have an idea how to make it sing," he said.

Paxton said he has been a member of SMI for 17 or 18 years, and helped hang the show, though not the floor his piece was on.

"Working and handling pieces, you get to know them more personally," he said.

That opportunity to get to know art and artists is one of SMI's strongest hooks. Block

said that this year's State of the Art includes many artists new to the organization. She said with a smile, "I'm meeting people I don't know."

'State of the Art 2017'

Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., through April 14

SMI Gallery and SMI Virginia S. Block Gallery

Academy Square, 33 Plymouth St.

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