

Group brings varying experiences together for exhibit

Thursday, July 13, 2006

The Arlington Center for the arts announces "Transitions," an exhibit by the seven-woman Metro-Lex Artists Group, on display in the Gibbs Gallery from July 17 through Aug. 11. Working in a variety of different media from printmaking to photography, collage, fabric and clay, the Metro-Lex artists all use their artwork to contemplate and reflect on the transitions of life.

The Metro-Lex Artists Group formed five years to provide this group of seven international women the opportunity to critique artistic process and exchange ideas generated by new materials. The artists meet once a month to share viewpoints and see individual progress. These artists have vastly dissimilar backgrounds, but shared a deep interest and understanding of the transitions in women's lives.

Having come to the Greater Boston area from all over the world, these artists show both diversity and universality in women's art. Many in the group have tackled life changes, such as loss of a partner, severe health issues and family crisis, which are all reflected in their artwork.

Coming to terms with the many stages in life requires an understanding of transitions. These artists use the opportunity of each life change to present points of view in dealing with these passages. Art provides a venue to deal with change and loss.

Hungarian born, Marika Barnet constructs kaleidoscope photography from world travels. She is constantly searching for the "fifth image" that magically transforms four identical photos. The original object disappears as the design emerges to reinforce or contradict the original object. This unexpected sight then surfaces through the creation of the mirror image.

Barbara Bartlett shows this series of work accomplished in Australia, where she lives part of each year. At the time, she was thinking about the transitions and how important making art is in different places. Art-making is a unifying force, creating intersections and overlapping themes. The first layer in Bartlett's pieces is a ground made of fragments of her "morning pages." Daily writing helps her to make transitions; therefore it seemed natural to include them in her work. The overlapping grids have to do with the many layers of her life.

Joyce Collier Fearnside, a New Englander, and curator of the show, treats transitions similarly by showing layers of trees and other natural materials. Each image stands alone but changes with each overlapping layer. The clarity of a sparse forest versus the density of another forest is predictable as our lives change with each metamorphosis. Her work is a metaphor for community changes and interacting environments.

Sirarpi Heghinian-Walzer, who came from Germany, searches her memories as a Syrian for distilled images. Her mixed media art speaks with the musicality of Kandinsky and the inwardness of Klee, while providing the tension between freedom and containment.

Young Shin, from Korea, explores childhood as a symbolic space with haunting and identifiable objects. She balances found fabrics, dyed and printed images with punctuated stitches, creating fabric art inspired by her own spiritual journey.

Swiss artist Gabriele Stewart looks to painting as a culmination of a lifelong journey to express color, texture and form. Balancing her well being with significant time to paint has produced startling still life images to abstract impressionism.

Pao Fei Yang lost her husband this past year, but art sustains her continued life through saggar fired clay work. Her process is stimulated by the ever-changing seasons. Architectural elements have been incorporated since visiting Europe and Morocco. It is the experimental combination of natural elements, metals and oxides that keep this Taiwanese artist creating, while it mirrors her unpredictable life.

"Transitions" curator Joyce Collier Fearnside curated exhibits monthly for 10 years at Cary Memorial Library in Lexington, where she also managed the library's print rental collection. She also helped launch the gallery at Munroe Center for the Arts in Lexington.

During the past five years, the Metro-Lex Artists group has exhibited for the "Just in Time" Composers Concert series at the Follen Community Church, Lexington (2001), the Munroe Center for the Arts Gallery, Lexington (2002), and the Parish Center for the Arts Gallery, Westford (2003).

"Transitions" will be on display in the Gibbs Gallery, Arlington Center for the Arts, 41 Foster St., from July 17 through August 11. The public is invited to the artists reception on Tuesday, Aug. 8, from 6-8 p.m. Gallery hours are Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free and open to the public.