

Jewish artists stand together in Stand Tall exhibit

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It would take a group of artists to convert some cold, stark white, uninviting rooms into a brilliant maze of diverse, colourful, emotional and unique images. The Association of Jewish Artists has done just that, assembling a varied palette of works and themes in its premiere art exhibition entitled Stand Tall.

"We took an empty space and turned it into a museum," said the show's producer, Sol Levinson, who thought up the idea while buying art supplies.

Levinson and an executive committee worked 14 months to realize the project, comprised of 70 artists and 128 pieces. A grant from the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal helped fund the undertaking.

"We feel our group can build bridges by revealing our similarities and that our creative expressions are a gift to be shared to show that we are more alike than we are different," Levinson explained.

The show features a strong collection of works by a variety of

Jewish artists. A blend of historical and contemporary, it encompasses a wide range of themes and subjects. Traditional Judaic pieces are juxtaposed to modern digital video art. Hand coloured photographs, paintings, sculptures, prints and pottery are among the works one will encounter. Viewers will pass through five rooms on a journey through realism, figurative and abstract styles.

Ten per cent of the sales from the show go to the Youth Institute of the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts Art Party Scholarship Fund.

"This is just a starting point. It's an excuse to have a big exhibition," said NDG artist Susan Garfield-Shulman, who is on the exhibit's executive committee. "It's a celebration of Jewish creativity."

A main attraction of the exhibit is a delicate, graceful sculpture of a swan made of lucite by local artist Susan Wohl. It's her first foray in the medium and she said the feedback has been positive.

"It's very rewarding because there's a lot of work involved in it and only people who love art can do sculpture because it's very

messy and hard work."

Another one of her works is a Greek alabaster sculpture depicting Moses with two tablets.

"My sculptures go down in history," she said, referring to the fact that they are shown in places around the world such as the Russian Holocaust Centre.

There is photography at the show as well. Joel Silverstein started doing photography over 20 years ago but has taken it on as a second career over the last two years.

A student at the Dawson school of Commercial Photography, he captures expressions of people and moods places. Only about ten per cent of his work is colour.

"Black and white is very much a question of forms and structure and you're playing with the black, the white and the grey. And you're looking for different things," he explained.

Also adorning the walls are paintings ranging from oil on canvas, to acrylic to watercolour, which is Norma Lehrer's forte. She is interested in painting scenes concerning the environment and the role of women in primitive cultures. She said the group exhibit gives artists who have not had the chance to show their art some exposure.

Nicole Landy is also on the show's executive committee and is known in the artistic community for her intricate collage work.

"I'm a big hoarder and I never realized why until I discovered collage," she said. She collects different materials of varied shapes and sizes and incorporates them into one elaborate and unique image.



Among the artists in the show are NDG's Susan Garfield-Shulman (above), Hampstead's Leiba Rustin (bottom left) and Susan Wohl of Snowden (bottom right). Photos by Margo Vizbara.

The show includes established artists such as Montreal icon Ghitta Caiserman Roth, while others like Igor Tyschler are just emerging onto the art scene.

Tyschler, a native of Russia, is an up and coming artist whose flair for striking colours did not go unnoticed at the vernissage. Though he is equally successful in his classical pieces, it is his black based paintings with vivid hues that identify his work.

"I see the image in my head then I produce the details," said Tyschler, who has had no formal training in art.

Hampstead resident Leiba Rustin draws her ideas for art from places or items she has encountered in her life.

She said she likes to make beautiful, things that might seem ordinary and mundane such as the chair her mother sat in.

She worked on a series about the various blessings that exists in Judaism. 'Blessing for the Fruits of the Earth' shows tomatoes from her garden and her grandmother's candlesticks

placed on a window sill in her house. The blessing is written around the scene.

Though this show consists solely of Jewish artists, plans are in the works for a spring show which may branch out to include artists of different denominations.

Stand Tall will be shown until November 1 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed Saturdays) at Decarie Square, 6900 Decarie Blvd.

