

Spontaneity marks VAAL art show

By Marie McGee
staff writer

DREAMS CAME true this week for Livonia artist Audrey Harkins in more ways than one.

Her painting was selected for best of show honors in the annual fall exhibit of the Visual Arts Association now in progress in the lobby of Livonia City Hall.

Harkins and 26 VAAL artists will be honored at an opening reception 2-4 p.m. Sunday. The public may attend.

Harkins, a Livonia resident, titled her watercolor "Dreams Come True . . ." basing it on photos she took while on a trip to Hawaii.

"I worked on this painting for a long time. There were several times when it had to be set aside, so overall, it took about two years to complete. No matter how long it was, every time I started to work on it again, the song, 'Blue Hawaii' would run through my mind, always starting with the phrase, 'Dreams come true . . .'"

HARKINS SAID she will probably do another painting based on photos she took on her Hawaii trip.

"I tend to connect my paintings with songs, I don't know why. I've always enjoyed painting fabric, and this piece was so lovely, I wanted to show the color, pattern and softness of it. The rest of the painting composed itself — I just laid out brochures and photos."

Of Harkins' painting, show judge Mary Aro said: "I liked this combination of still life and landscape. This composition was very good and technical ability and choice of subject matter was unusual and looked like it could have been painted on location. This artist showed technical

skill and the feelings about the objects painted reveal the artist's emotions."

Winner of the equally prestigious Grumbacher award — for best use of color — was last year's best-of-show winner and VAAL newcomer, Dawn Johnson.

Again, Johnson used her children as the theme of her watercolor entry. This year's offering was "Tara's Room." A Livonia homemaker, Johnson said she tried to portray her daughter's personality through items in her room, her shoes, etc.

Aro's comments were: "I liked this subject matter, and the technique and softness of the work goes well with it. This is technically very good. Shoes have been painted before but this is an unusual way to present them. It's great to see people paint what's in their homes, the common ordinary things, particularly like the teddy bear and its angle."

OTHER WINNERS in the show are:

- Dearborn Heights artist Irene Kallas, a first place in oils for "Brown Chair";
- Southfield artist Mary Koss, a first in watercolors for "Belgionia Silverbowl";
- Farmington artist Carol Wharton, a first in the combined category for a pastel, "Top of the Dune."

Second- and third-place winners were:

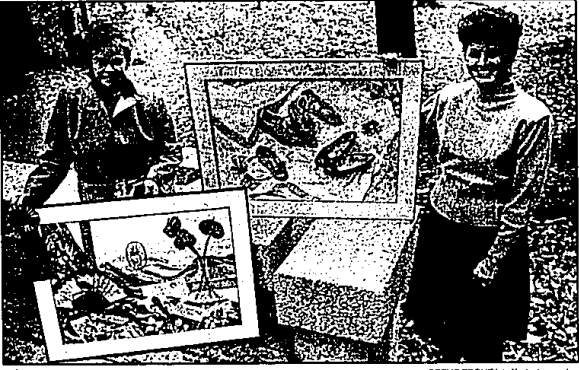
- Oil — second place, Edna Eary, "Tables Await"; third place, Helena Lewicki, "Greenmead Park";
- Watercolor — second place, Mary Ehler, "Blue Pitcher of Flowers"; third place, Shirley Caesar, "Hats Galore";
- Combined category — second place, Norbert Davert for a photograph, "Stools — Dearborn"; and third place, Marge Masek, for a pastel, "Footprints in the Snow."

Aro of Huntington Woods holds art bachelor's and master's degrees from Wayne State University and studied at the Art Foundation in LaNappe, France. She is also an instructor at the Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association and Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester. In July Aro's work in watercolors was featured in American Artist magazine.

The VAAL exhibit will run through Friday, Nov. 18, and is open to the public during normal City Hall hours of business: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Arrangements for the show are coordinated by the Livonia Arts Commission.

'This is a beautiful show.'

— Mary Aro
show judge



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Livonia artists Audrey Harkins (left) and Dawn Johnson took top honors in the fall show of the Visual Arts Association of Livonia now under way in the Livonia City Hall. A public reception 2-4 p.m. Sunday will honor all the artists.



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Giftorama 'stars'

Giftorama at Cranbrook Schools' Kingswood campus in Bloomfield Hills will feature the handiwork of craftsmen from all parts of the country. Shown here are two hand-carved Santas by a Tennessee artist, a previous participant, who is introducing Santa necklaces at the show. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 13. More than 48 shops will be featured. Admission is \$3, including parking. Snacks are available. For more information, call 645-3134.

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