

Artists from around state display work at craft fair

By Stephen Masters
Reporter

As a child, I can remember spending entire weekends at craft shows, often against my will. Time that could well be spent playing outside was spent looking at one more stained glass work. Then I grew older and didn't have to go. I avoided the shows like the plague—until now.

The Spring Craft Festival, promoted by MSC University Plus, was held Tuesday and Wednesday featuring craft artists from throughout the state showing their wares. The boredom I once found at such shows was replaced with fascination and excitement, as well as a real appreciation for the amount of time and energy placed into each piece. Even the stained glass was impressive.

When Kirk Houser of Greenbriar takes time out from practicing juggling five balls at once and isn't giving reporters a quick lesson, he falls back on stained glass.

"Get my ideas from wrapping paper or books or anything with a picture on it," he said.

His inventory includes stained glass grapes, bicycles and even a kaleidoscope made of plumbing pipe with mirrors and two stained glass wheels on the end, one of many items he's seen in 13 years of working with stained glass.

"Sometimes I get really frustrated and I just have to walk away," he said. "Juggling helps in that way. I'll be cutting a piece of glass and it'll break, so I'll leave. Then I'll come back the next day and cut a piece and it'll break too. You definitely have to be patient."

Keith Sink of Bryan, who was selling stained glass at the show in place of his wife Beverly who actually does the artwork, agreed.

Mrs. Sink works on the Texas A&M campus as a secretary in the biochemistry department and has been making stained glass art in her spare time for six years. She got started by taking a University Plus class on stained glass.

Mr. Sink said it usually takes her around two days if she uses a pattern from a craft book, but patience is still important.

Of course, patience comes into



Photo by Jay Janner

Hand-made bean bag dolls were on sale at the Spring Craft Festival Wednesday at Rudder Fountain. Mark Walter created these dolls and sells them for \$6 each.

play in all types of craft work, not just stained glass. Just ask first-timer Steven Bradford of Houston who has been building windmills shaped like birds, woodcutters and waterwells for three months.

"It takes around six hours to make each of the birds, but most of that time is spent painting," Bradford said. "It takes two coats of white (paint) and waiting for it to dry takes a lot of time."

Other items don't take artists long at all. Mark Walter of Bastrop makes clowns with solid wood heads and bodies stuffed with soybeans, an art he has practiced for the last eight years.

"Each face is hand-drawn and painted, but it only takes about twenty minutes for me to make each clown," he said. "Of course, when you include all the time spent for each one, it comes out to about 50 cents per hour."

"I got the idea when I lived in Europe with several craftspeople. I started out making stuffed animals and slowly evolved toward clowns."

Others never give up on stuffed

animals, like Peggy Burnett of Houston.

"I've always loved craft shows," she said. "Once I went to one where someone was doing a lace bear and they asked me to help."

"After I got through helping I wondered why I couldn't do the same thing, so I started making stuffed animals and have been ever since. That was about three years ago."

Still others, like Peter Drucker, avoid cloth and go with precious metals.

"Some of my stuff takes 10 minutes to do; other stuff takes an entire year," he said. "I make my jewelry to last more than one generation so it takes longer to do."

Drucker's gold and silver chains take longer because they are hand woven, a tedious process when working with metals. However, most of his jewelry is forged with a hammer and doesn't take quite so long.

So not only did I survive the craft show, I even enjoyed it. So much for childhood memories.

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Pulitzer prize-winner discusses themes present in American art

By Lucinda Orr
Reporter

Pulitzer Prize-winner Dr. William H. Goetzmann, in his Wednesday night lecture "Western Art as Intellectual History: the Paradox of Conquest as Reflected in Western Art," gave a slide presentation to explain some of the themes historically present in American paintings.

The University of Texas history professor previously taught at Yale and Cambridge universities, has published 48 scholarly articles, and either authored or co-authored 12 other books, including one which earned a Pulitzer Prize nomination and which he adapted as a six-part television series that PBS aired last year.

Western art's portrayal of manifest destiny and conquest was the first of four themes Goetzmann explained during the lecture. He showed several slides, including John Gast's "American Progress" and Emmanuel Leutze's "Westward the Course of Empire," to illustrate how artists of that time saw pioneers, covered wagons, railroads and expansion.

"The American people seemed to accept manifest destiny and to accept the whole idea of conquest... with pride, rather than guilt," Goetzmann said.

The second segment of the presentation concentrated on artwork that depicted nature, including Thomas Moran's "The Grand Can-

yon of the Yellowstone" and Albert Bierstadt's "A Storm in the Rocky Mountains."

As his third theme, Goetzmann discussed how Darwinism, evolution and "survival of the fittest" were portrayed in western art. Several of Frederic Remington's works were shown to point out the struggles and hardships of existence.

The fourth portion of the program was how western art shows the rise of anthropology.

Goetzmann will be conducting a lecture titled "Americans, Exploration and the Culture of Science: a Moral Melodrama" at 8 tonight in Rudder Tower 601.

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