

The Columbus Dispatch

EVENTS

Riffe Gallery show traces growth of Excellence Award winners

Melissa Starker, For The Columbus Dispatch

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To an artist, an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council is more than a sign of recognition; it's an incentive to keep going.

Providing money that can be used for anything from supplies to living expenses, the award puts artists in the best position to focus on refining their skills and visions, and to enrich the community with their work.

On view at the Riffe Gallery, "Flashback to Now: OAC Support for Individual Artists" offers a glance at 15 visual artists who were among the first to receive the arts council's individual grants more than 30 years ago — and it shows how they have evolved creatively in the years since.

The shifts over time take a subtle form in works by artists such as sculptor Jack Earl of Lakeview, and Maureen France, a documentary photographer based in Cincinnati.

In several sparsely populated porcelain landscapes from the early 1980s and 2013, Earl is consistent in his density of texture and balance of whimsicality and grit.

France maintains a remarkable clarity and sense of openness as she moves from photographing circus animals and sideshow performers in late-1980s works such as *Ostriches* to amateur boxers in training in 2014.

Other artists offer signs of a more dramatic change through the years, such as Dorothy Gill Barnes of Worthington. Small, intricately woven baskets from early in her career contrast with *Cherry Blocks With Glass*, a 2013 collaboration with glass artist Nate Ricciuto. While each work highlights Barnes' use of organic materials, *Cherry Blocks With Glass* has a unique way of celebrating process: incorporating the wooden tools used to shape blown glass.

In early, three-dimensional wall sculptures in glazed ceramic, Columbus artist Mary Jo Bole presents a funky, colorful view of Cleveland industrial sites. In drawings from the recent series "Combing Columbus," her attention turns from how physical landscape defines a place to the role that individual perception plays in civic identity.

A change of scenery opened possibilities for Cleveland's Garie Waltzer. From early explorations of how Xerographic collage could fill a canvas, she moved on to create photo series that examine how humanity fills the Earth's landscape, capturing scenes from cities worldwide.

The late, great Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson found a lifetime of inspiration within the stories shared by her family elders.

They live on in *The Storyteller: In Honor of My Uncle Alvin Frederick Zimmerman*, a colorful stitched work from 1989, and in 2015's *Themba*. Sharing its name and inspiration with the massive scroll that Robinson worked on for five decades (now in the collection of the Columbus Museum of Art), *Themba* is a comparatively

small and minimal portrait of the artist's great-aunt that nonetheless conveys the force of the woman's personality and her influence on the girl who would become one of the nation's most celebrated African-American artists.

"Flashback to Now: OAC Support for Individual Artists" continues through Oct. 18 in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, until 8 p.m. Thursdays, noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

Call 614-644-9624 or visit oac.state.oh.us/riffe