

Mystic hosts annual outdoor art show

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Abigail Pheiffer The Day

Laurie Sheffield, right, of Warwick, R.I., examines a decorative door or window topper before purchasing it from the Partners for Haiti booth at the 53rd Mystic Outdoor Art Festival on Saturday.

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Mystic - It's often said about the Mystic Outdoor Art Festival, the 53rd edition of which began Saturday and will continue today, is that it's mostly paintings of sailboats and lighthouses.

And sure, art lovers who crowded downtown Mystic on a temperate Saturday had plenty of nautically themed works of art from which to choose.

But at the annual festival, as event director Alexa Shelton said, the 275 exhibitors offer "something for everyone."

Set up on the blocked-off Cotrell Street, West Warwick, R.I., painter Michael Carr displayed his collection of color-splashed, impressionist outdoor scenes.

"I usually paint en plein air, then go back to the studio and paint from memory," Carr said.

Carr's work depicted the artist's leafy backyard, some other locales in Jamestown R.I., and, in a change of pace, an Edward Hopper-esque building blanketed in pale light.

Carr, who has come to the art show for three years in row, said this year he'd received some interest but no sales as of noon Saturday.

Over on Willow Street, Robin Grace, a native of Perth, Australia, who now calls Kingston, R.I., home, was showing off her collection of abstract, polychromatic paintings.

"I'm a colorist," said Grace, who has an art degree from Connecticut College. "That's been the driving force."

Grace, who claims Matisse, Cezanne and Van Gogh as influences, said lately she's been inspired by the late abstract expressionist Joan Mitchell.

The multimedia works by Austin-based artist Heather Harris cannot be contained by the frame.

Harris' subjects, such as the Golden Gate Bridge, start out as paintings, but then morph into metal forming the frame.

"I was in a club in Monterey, Mexico, and it was very industrial and there were these metal cables everywhere," she said.

Intrigued, she eventually took a metals class and began incorporating it into her works.

Usually, Harris' works are made in tandem. First she creates a fairly naturalistic representation of the subject matter, and then takes a design element from that work to make a second, more abstract piece.

The paintings are sold separately, Harris explained.

In addition to the art, local non-profits were selling an assortment of festival food to raise money for a variety of causes, and several buskers took to the streets to sing cover songs.

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Art Show winners:

Best in Show: Phillip J. Chagnon

Robert Brackman Award: Stephen Previte

Beonne Beronda Award: Kimberly Scoble

Marion Tetlow Award: Heather Lusk

Milton Baline Award: Dee Lessard

Acrylics: Steven Ray

Graphics: Bryon Robinson

Mixed Media: Stephanie Nadolski

Oils: Lillian Forziat

Pastels: Jennifer Gardner

Photography: Michael Chen

Sculpture: Robert Alan Hyde

Watercolors: Rosalind Oesterie

Crafts: Joanna Case and Less Olin

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