See the 'cosmic, abstract' entries and winners in this year's 'On Our Own Time' art competition

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"Illumination II" – artwork depicting a closeup view of a dragonfly on a multi-layered surface created by Elizabeth Criger, information technology services coordinator in the Infra and Foundational Tech office in University of Arizona Information Technology – won first place in the professional category at the 14th annual "Own Our Own Time" art exhibit and competition. The showcase features the work of University employees, retirees, volunteers and members of their immediate families. The exhibit is on display in the lobby of Bioscience Research Laboratories, 1230 N. Cherry Ave., through Saturday.

More than 140 pieces of art were entered into this year's exhibit, which can be viewed online. Entries span a wide array of mediums and styles, from pen and pencil drawings to photography, sculptures, paintings and even jewelry.

"Every year has something of a theme, and it's never planned," said Pamela Wagner, exhibit coordinator and operations coordinator for the Department of Family and Community Medicine in the College of Medicine – Tucson. "But you just seem to get certain things in certain years. One year, a third of the entries were all skulls – and it was across the mediums. This year, black and white is big. And cosmic, abstract entries. It's really interesting to see that happen."

Self-expression through art

Charlotte Pearson, who won second place in the amateur category for "Crater Lake and Thera eruption timeline," said the competition and her work in the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research inspired her to take out her oil paints for the first time in more than a decade.

The idea for her piece – which shows a vertical stack of dark colored bands – came while working on a team that was dating highly explosive volcanic eruptions that turned nearby trees into charcoal and created lots of charcoal in the form of dust and fragments.

"I couldn't bring myself to put it in the trash because these trees are around 3,500-7,000 years old and frankly kind of awesome to work on," Pearson said. "So I kept sweeping it up, bagging it and thinking 'One day I'll try to use this for an art project.'"

Her finished work, painted onto a wooden board, is scaled to represent about 11,700 years using waste charcoal from each carbonized tree.

"I'm grateful to have had this opportunity," Pearson said. "Without this coming up, my paints would probably still be in their box. Now I feel like I'd like to do more."

Criger said her work explores human experience and the depth and complexity of people's subconscious drives.

"Working in mixed media on board, this piece reflects my love of nature and biology," Criger explained. "It references things above and below the surface, such as the hidden mysteries of the natural world or the inner workings of our minds and bodies."

A rewarding hobby

A panel of three judges chose winners in five categories – professional, intermediate, amateur, teen and youth – as well as awards for Best of Show and Art Education. All of the winning artists received cash prizes.

This year's competition also includes a People's Choice Award. Votes can be cast online until noon on Friday. The award does not include a monetary prize.

"On Our Own Time" is funded entirely through the National Arts Program, an organization that partners with workplaces across the nation to recognize the artistic expression of employees and their families. The program is coordinated by the University's Employee Recognition Committee.

"I like this program because it is a way for people to get to know others in a different manner," Wagner said. "You may know these people from someplace else, and it helps you get to know the people sitting next to you in the office, or across campus, and also their children. It is really amazing to see the talent people have, and you may never know it."

This year's exhibit will close with an artist's reception and presentation of awards on Saturday from 1-3 p.m. at Bioscience Research Laboratories. The event is open to the public.
This year's winners are below.

Best of Show – "Inside the Cell" by Ted Huff, senior graphic designer, Department of Family and Community Medicine

Art Education Award (given to an artist in the teen or youth category, includes a $200 prize to be used for an arts class or materials) – "Rosie the Princess" by Maggie South, family of Kelly South, senior director of marketing and communications, University Information Technology Services

Professional
- First place – "Illumination II" by Elizabeth Criger, IT services coordinator, Infra and Foundational Tech
- Second place – "La Pesadilla de Pedro Páramo" by Ruben Moreno, senior exhibit specialist, Arizona State Museum
- Third place – "Hand-Fabricated Desert Monsoon Necklace with Raindrop Chain in Sterling Silver, 14 Karat Gold, and Natural Bisbee Turquoise" by Erick Buckley, family of Laura Johnson, senior vice president for legal affairs, Office of the General Counsel

Intermediate
- First place – "View From the Mesa" by Mike Krebbs, senior HR specialist, Division of Human Resources
- Second place – "Home" by Fatima Ruiz, financial aid counselor, Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Third place – "Mendel's rules?...." by Sergio Castrezana, research technician and laboratory manager, Department of Entomology

Amateur
- First place – "Wild Connection" by Shailender Chauhan, assistant scientific investigator, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine
- Second place – "Crater Lake and Thera eruption timeline" by Charlotte Pearson, associate professor, Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research
- Third place – "I'm feline fine!" by Anna Alkozei, clinical assistant professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine

Teen (13-18)
- First place – "Bath" by Riley Royse, family of Rhonda Royse, assistant director of identity, access and integrations, University Information Technology Services
- Second place – "There Is Only Change" by Emma Kimm, family of Minkyu Kim, associate professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering
- Third place – "Feline Hygiene" by Victoria Escamilla, family of Sonya Lopez-Escamilla, procurement assistant, University Information Technology Services

Youth (12 and under)
- First place – "Desert hummingbird" by Katherine Wang, family of Steve Wang, department chair, Department of Otolaryngology
- Second place – "Winter’s Lone Guardian" by Aaron Li, family of Ming Li, associate professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Third place – "Dog, Hot Glue and Stuffing" by Ezra Coan, family of Andrew Coan, associate dean, College of Law

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