



LOCAL ART GETTING ITS DUE

Area businesses are displaying more from Hall, Gainesville artists

BY ANDREW AKERS

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The local art community in Gainesville is benefitting from a rising trend. More and more businesses are choosing to display work from local painters in their establishments.

"Businesses and government buildings are really bringing the arts — especially local art — into their place of business," said Fox Gradin, director of Gainesville's Art in the Square. "I think it is picking up momentum, but I don't think it is a trend."

"It is here to stay. It's only going to get bigger and better, and it is going to take a strong hold in our community."

The list of businesses with local art on display includes places such as Peach State Bank & Trust, Regions bank, Cosa Nostra Italian Kitchen, Inman Perk Coffee, Avocados Restaurant, Main Street Market and the Northeast Georgia Medical Center.

Most of the artists whose works are showcased are found through the Georgia Art League, which helps organize similar exhibits, and the Quinlan Visual Arts Center.

"When you bring art into your business, you bring clientele because the community wants art," Gradin said. "People will come in to look at the art and while they're there, they'll take the opportunity to shop at your stores and order food at your restaurants."

"It is nothing but good."

Susan Williams marketing officer for Peach State Bank & Trust in Gainesville, said the bank has been hosting solo exhibits of local artists on its third floor since early 2007.

The art helps attract customers and builds a stronger connection between the business and the community, she said.

"Our third floor is used by a lot of nonprofits and women's groups that meet up there for their monthly meetings," Williams said. "When they do that, they get to see the art."

"We've also had people come in the bank just to go upstairs and see the art."

Peach State's current exhibit consists of several works in oil and pastel by local artist Judy Baker. This is the first time Baker has had a solo exhibit since she started seriously pursuing art four years ago after she retired.

Although initially resistant to the idea of displaying her work, she decided to go through with the exhibition after Williams contacted her about it.

Since then, she has sold several paintings, a first-time experience for the painter.

"I just wanted to paint for the pure joy of it, but it is always great to know other people validate your work," Baker said. "I think all artists struggle with thinking 'Am I really an artist? Should I be calling myself an artist?'"

"If people are willing to pay money for your work, you know they approve of it."



Photos by NAT GURLEY | The Times

Above: Snowmen images by local artist Judy B. Baker have been popular viewing items, according to a Peach State Bank and Trust official. They are on display on the bank's second floor. **Top:** Photographs by local artist Sterling Brown hang on the wall at Avocados Restaurant on Bradley Street on the downtown square.

Marianne Scott is a volunteer who helps organize the art displayed at Inman Perk Coffee in downtown Gainesville.

"It all began when the cafe won an award for interior design, remodeling in a sleek contemporary style," she said. "We artists were seeking an elegant background to showcase original art in the abstract style, with 'solo' shows to help the art audience get into the head of artistic thinking by seeing many works by a single artist."

Cosa Nostra Italian Kitchen, a restaurant in downtown Gainesville, recently commissioned several local artists to work on a mural in their dining room. Paula Hoffman is one of six painters working on the mural.

"The more eyes we can get on art, the better," she said. "I think people really enjoy seeing art everywhere, whether they are going into the bank, a restaurant or the hospital."

"There is a certain amount of pride when you see really good art that really speaks to you, and then you find out the artist lives in your community."

Northeast Georgia Medical Center is expanding its artistic reach. The health system is seeking decorate its new Braselton hospital with artwork from local artists.

"Artwork will play an important role in our new hospital for a variety of reasons," said Anthony Williamson, vice president of Greater Braselton. "Not only does it create a visually pleasing and cohesive experience for patients and visitors, evidence-based research also has proven that a soothing environment can reduce patient stress and perception of pain and improve patient outcomes. We'll even use strategically placed artwork to assist with way finding."

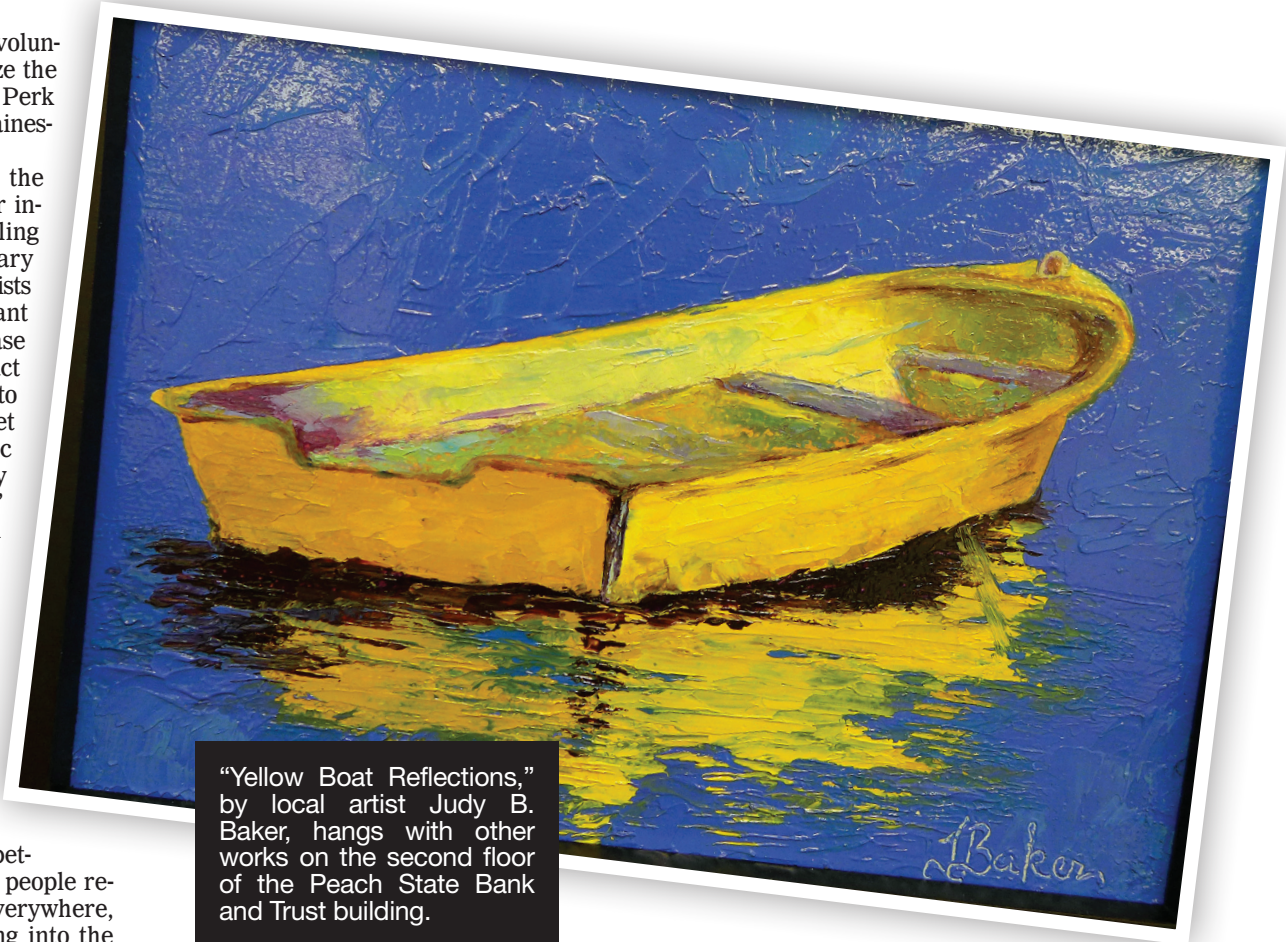
Williamson said NGMC hopes to purchase more than 60 local pieces for the new hospital.

Mediums can include oil, acrylic, pastel, watercolor, glass, mosaic tile, photography, fabric, metal and mixed media.

The artwork should depict recognizable familiar landscapes, including orchards, waterscapes, florals and garden scenes that represent the local geography and topography. Images should be full color spectrum depicting sunny days.

"We're seeking art that will complement our serene, warm, natural environment while supporting our way finding plan and creating 'Wow!' moments," Williamson said.

The deadline for submissions is March 31. For more information, visit www.distinctiveartsource.com/call-for-artists/call-for-artists-northeast-georgia.



"Yellow Boat Reflections," by local artist Judy B. Baker, hangs with other works on the second floor of the Peach State Bank and Trust building.

New Art in the Square director wants more exposure

BY ANDREW AKERS

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After 10 years of leading the ever-expanding Art in the Square festival, director Anne Brodie Hill handed over the reigns to area artist and business owner Fox Gradin.

Though the announcement came in January, Gradin has been working to organize this year's festival since the end of last year's record-setting 10-year anniversary celebration.

"Last year was the only

year it rained, so that was very memorable," Gradin said. "But we had a record number of people come out even in the rain."

"We thought that was very significant and telling about how popular this festival is becoming."

Every year the festival takes over the downtown square in Gainesville for a weekend to show off local artists. Last year, the festival



Gradin

was mentioned in a calendar of events for Southern Living magazine, which lead, in part, to an increase of attendants from areas such as Atlanta.

The festival is a juried arts show, meaning the art is evaluated by a group of judges. In addition, the show features live music and performance art, something Gradin wishes to see more of in future festivals.

"I feel like I'm really on the forefront of making Gainesville an arts community," Gradin said. "That is really a very precious thing to me, and I'm really honored to be part of that blossoming."

"I'm interested in varied artistic works, and that is what I'm looking to bring to Gainesville as well."

Gradin first became interested in art through photography when she used her father's camera as a child.

"Since I can remember I've been a photographer," she

said. "I learned everything I could on my dad's camera. When I went to college I knew I wanted to study art."

She attended then-North Georgia College and State University and studied photography under professor Hank Margeson. It was there that Gradin picked up an interest in growing the art community in Gainesville and North Georgia.

"I am very interested in public art and in having places where people can experience new cultures and diversity in

arts," she said. "That seed was planted in college."

In 2003, Gradin opened Celestial Studios in downtown Gainesville. It was originally just a photography studio, but has since grown into a fine arts studio and store.

This year's Art in the Square will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 20-21 in downtown Gainesville. More than 120 artists from all across the Southeast will display fine art, original oil paintings, unique pottery, handmade jewelry and other fine crafts.