

Appleton's Biennial exhibit extends well beyond pictures on a wall

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The plain, white walls of the Appleton's main gallery are alive once again as the museum showcases Florida artists in the "Appleton Biennial 2012: Florida Installation Art" exhibition. On display are works in mediums including textiles, plastics, metals and even neon lights and recycled materials.

Ruth Grim, curator of exhibitions, contends the works now on display add new dimensions and beauty to the gallery.

"I call it our white-wall challenge," Grim said with a chuckle earlier this month as artists were installing works. "I'm just waiting for the video components, the color and light and the interesting things to animate it. That was the inspiration for how the biennial art happened. We wanted some things that would spread up and out and really enhance the space."

The Appleton held its last installation exhibition two years ago, hence the name "biennial." Installation art is something that happens when the artists create and



Jacqui Janetzko/ Correspondent

Marina Font puts together her art installation, "A Sense of Home," at the Appleton Museum of Art in Ocala. The "Appleton Biennial 2012: Florida Installation Art" will be on exhibit through Aug. 12.

install their work at the display site using, in many cases, unconventional materials.

"I'm hoping the guests come away with a greater understanding and appreciation of this sort of new-age artistic expression and an understanding that art is limitless," she said. "We should value the things that don't put constraints on us. In other words, let your imagination soar."

The 12 participating artists are providing a diverse, well-balanced display, Grim said.

"What we have is a number of pieces that are using weavings and crocheted fabrics and things in a different and a new and creative way," she said. "They are recalling older craft traditions in a conceptual new-age way, but the medium is close to the older traditions. One thing I've been noticing, there also seems to be a strong current addressing environmental issues."

Such is the case with Danilo Gonzalez' use of recycled materials to create a forest effect. Janis Brothers' video installation depicts the Suwannee River with an actual tank of water and videos projected from both sides. Another highlight will be Pip Brant's large display called "Blood Veil," a red cage bathed in doilies representing the use of veils in women's apparel, religiously and culturally.

"I love Pip Brant's piece," Grim said. "I just think, as an object, it's just stunning. And, it's sizeable, so it'll have a real presence in the gallery."

Another favorite for Grim is Alex Trimino's "Luminous Disparities," which incorporates neon lights, crocheted items and Plexiglas tubes. "You kind of have to be in front of it to really get an understanding of it," she said.

Grim credited Miami artist/curator Alette Simmons-Jimenez for putting together the collection.

"When you get really strong works together, there's a harmony that develops that makes it all flow nicely," Grim said.

"You can interact with it," Simmons-Jimenez said. "They move a bit. The whole experience is that you participate. It's where the space becomes part of the piece itself."

In a similar sense, Wes Kline's video installation, "Blue of Noon," uses the architectural layout of the museum for a series of still shots interwoven with a single tracking video.

In a recent Skype interview from a teaching engagement in Germany, Kline spoke about his project, which involves a 9-by-16-foot free-standing screen and subtle blue lighting. Kline said he was inspired by the 1945 film "House of Dracula," which starred Martha O'Driscoll before she was the wife of Appleton Museum founder Arthur I. Appleton. With that film in mind, he filmed an automated bat traveling through the halls and galleries of the museum.

"The viewer will see this bat gliding through the museum in a single continuous shot," he said.

An assistant professor of photography at the University of Florida, Kline has displayed his talents in numerous museums in several states, as well as at the Harn Museum of Art in Gainesville. He also participated in the Appleton's 2010 installation-art exhibition.

"I find this a very satisfying way to work," Kline said. "I think the Appleton is really bold to support this kind of work in Florida, highlighting works that build on the architecture of the museum and the museum collection. I'm really glad that they're bringing all that to Ocala."

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