

ENTERTAINMENT TODAY

Today Editor Barbara Taylor 667-5468 btaylor@lfpres.com www.canoe.ca/LondonToday/home.html

Needles create art with edge

JAMES REANEY



COLUMNIST

For your art's sake, you should rush down to Games Needles Play at Museum London.

After opening in October, Games, the Canadian Embroiderers' Guild 30th anniversary juried fibre art exhibition, continues till next month. The London-sewn show, which brings together talents from across Canada, is well-worth absorbing at leisure — stitch-by-stitch as it were.

Games Needles Play celebrates the skill and vision of the guild. Since its 1971 founding, the organization has grown to a membership of 180. Throughout, the guild has kept faith with its stated mandate "to preserve and foster the practices of traditional stitchery and contemporary fabric embellishment."

If that sounds a bit mission-statement stiff, the endless thread of colours, ornamentation and thematic textures in Games fills out the design.

On opening night, there was much to enjoy beyond the dozens of works, selected from 195 entries. There were the hundreds of artists, families and friends. There was the moment when guest curator Johnnene Maddison of London spoke of how the exhibition confirmed the works' status as art. There was the obvious enthusiasm and sensibility

art curator Robin Metcalfe brought to the project.

All this and more, including the creative contributions of the three-member jury and the larger committee, is readily evident in Games Needles Play.

Games Needles Play
celebrates the skill and
vision of the guild.

For all that, the most fascinating corner of Games Needles Play is dominated by award-winning works from London artists Aidan Urquhart, Bev McNaughton and Kirtley Jarvis.

Urquhart's Boneyard Betty was judged best local entry. Like its cartoonish-mate Wacky Wanda, Betty shows the artist's ability to take his oddly-shaped creatures and satirical impulses into the guild's world. Like Wacky Wanda, Boneyard Betty includes worse-for-the-wear men's undershorts. As luck and the prize system would have it, Urquhart took home a new iron from the opening.

McNaughton's Containment series lodges stitchery in such homes as a lemon or a tomato. Then, McNaughton steps back to photograph the unsettling hybrid between nature and craft. McNaughton was third in grand prize judging.

Jarvis's best mixed media winner, Hooked: Hugh Dillon of the Headstones, uses wool suiting, wires, fishing equipment, thread and pins. Hooked also uses words from the hybrid mind of Dillon, doomy frontman of Canadian rockers, the Headstones.

Dillon would appear to curse as thoughtfully when quoted in thread as he does in Hard Core Logo, the rock film by Canadian director Bruce McDonald.

Hooked makes the best use of Dillon's mouth since McDonald last turned his camera on him.

But the presence of the fish hooks in the work, an allusion to Dillon's battle with heroin addiction and a fan's obsession, is the real point.

Like the rest of Games Needles Play, Hooked and those hooks have the right edge.

James Reaney's arts and entertainment column appears Thursdays. To talk to him, call 667-4607 or from outside London, 1-800-265-4105, ext. 4607. Write him at The London Free Press, P.O. Box 2280, London, Ont., N6A 4G1; fax 667-4528 or e-mail jreaney@lfpres.com