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The Bi-State Biennial Art Exhibition now on display at the Davenport Museum of Art has grown significantly since its 1999 incarnation, with 73 artists compared to 52 two years ago. The artists come from nearly 40 communities throughout Iowa and Illinois, and the states are evenly represented, with 41 works from Iowa and 39 from Illinois. It presents a wider cross-section of artists from our region and is more “cutting edge” than typical shows presented in local venues.

The juror for this year’s show was Randy Griffey, assistant curator of American art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and he maybe shows his biases. The Nelson-Atkins Museum is known for its fine collection of Henry Moore bronzes and, perhaps reflecting an appreciation of great sculpture, this year’s Biennial Exhibition has 12 three-dimensional works, compared to six in the 1999 show. Griffey chose the show from more than 600 slides.

The first-place winner, *Celtic Dream II*, by Steve Sinner of Bettendorf, was also an honorable mention at the 25th Annual Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition in April. Clearly, this is a good year for Sinner, and the recognition is well-deserved. Sinner’s inlaid wood vases and bowls are so exquisitely done and beautifully formed that they transcend craft and truly become fine art. In an August 2000 show at the MidCoast Fine Arts Gallery, some of Sinner’s work was selling for between $170 and $250, but with the recent awards, their value is surely increasing.

I don’t agree as much with Griffey’s choice for second place, *Good Friday, April 10, 1998*, by Kathy Mitchell of Iowa City. This piece is a takeoff on a Byzantine jewel-encrusted iconographic bas relief, but instead of pictures of the saints and Jesus, there are photographs or drawings of contemporary people who we assume are important in Mitchell’s life.

The third-place work is a pastel-on-paper drawing, *Garden’s End*, which shows an uprooted plant on a plain background. The size of the work makes it striking and very likely a surprise when viewed in person after judging it from a slide.

There were four honorable mentions: *Her Story*, a steel bas relief by Gillian Christy of Cedar Falls, Iowa; *Window, Jet Stream, Santa Rosa de Lima, N.M.*, an iris print from a

gelatin silver print by Beth Linn of Peoria, Illinois;
Grand Garden
, a pastel on paper by Ellen Wagener of DeWitt, Iowa; and
Chelsea Morning
, an oil and acrylic on wood panels by Daniel Weiss of Des Moines, Iowa.

There were a few other works that I liked in this show that didn't receive awards. One was *Rev elation*
, a six-foot-wide-by-four-foot-high pencil-and-pastel drawing by Jan Clough of Macomb, Illinois. I appreciate the tight composition and lovingly rendered female form in a work of this size. The drawing shows a woman, reclining on a bed with many pillows, wrapping her hair as one might after taking a shower to keep it from dripping. There is a serenity and peace that is appealing in the composition and color selection.

I also got a kick out of *Gift to Hide*, by Ethan Kruszka of Cedar Falls, Iowa. The work is a pair of latex pants with a penis and scrotum peeking out where the zipper and fly ought to have been.

Finally, I liked the museum's placement of the sculptures among the paintings and bas reliefs. The show is very well laid-out, and one of the works that benefits is *That Girl Down the Street*, by B. Thomas Lytle of Knoxville, Illinois. This is a steel and copper sculpture sitting atop a thin black pillar. It clearly depicts a carefree childhood moment and is displayed in such a way that we get the feeling that we are observing someone "down the street."

Local artists are well-represented in the show, and they measure up nicely to artists from larger markets such as Chicago. Leslie Bell of Davenport was one of only seven artists to score two works in the show. There are eight works from Quad City artists and six from Iowa City artists. Chicago and its suburbs scored 19 works.

We can take pride in this show as a reality check, giving us confidence that we have a first-rate art community. A major part in the development of this art community has been played by the Davenport Museum of Art, and we commend them for this show and past efforts in encouraging local artists.

The Bi-State Biennial Art Exhibition continues through August 19 at the Davenport Museum of Art.