

## Juried Exhibit Strong but Static

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This year's Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition is quite a bit different from last year's show. That's not surprising, because the exhibit will depend on the likes and dislikes of the juror. Last year, I recall more cutting-edge artwork, while this year there is more symbolism and whimsy. Last year's show filled me with enthusiasm for the directions and accomplishments of artists in the Quad Cities, while this year's show seems more static.

Still, the exhibit is worthy of praise. The Rock Island Arts Guild, exhibit co-chairs Jane Koski and Emily Smith, and Augustana College Art Museum Director Sherry Maurer have done a fine job in putting together the exhibition, which runs through April 27 at the Augustana College Art Museum. As one of the few juried competitions that provide cash prizes to the winners, the Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition deserves our support.

There are 43 works in this year's show, including eight from Iowa City artists and seven each from Davenport and Macomb. Four Rock Island artists are represented.

The exhibit makes me wonder whether some of the area's more prolific artists entered the show. It might be instructive to see who entered the show but is not represented, because juror Timothy Norris spends a major portion of his statement talking about the work turned down for the exhibit. Some of the works in this show are excellent, but I came away thinking that some of the artwork I've seen in the past year in other local displays is better than many of the works chosen for this one. (A list of Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition winners can be found [here](#) .

My favorite piece is *God of the Bugs* by John Vellenga from Monmouth, Illinois. It shows a bug's-eye view of a man with a spray can of what we can only assume is an insecticide. The hand-painted photograph maintains enough humor and menace for us to relate to the bug's perspective of life and death in a cultivated garden.

An interesting abstract piece is *Mustard* by Tod Schnowske from Plainfield, Illinois. It is an upholstered padded diamond-and-button pattern that calls to mind the kitchens of the 1950s. The colors remind one of Jackson Pollack if he applied more paint and had more dripping than splatter patterns.

While those are two pieces that struck my fancy, you can also make your voice heard and vote for your favorite work. Audience awards will be announced at 3:30 p.m. on April 27.