

Published February 13th, 2013

"Tokens of Affection" Exhibit Features Artwork from the Heart

By Lian Walden



Photos David VanderJagt

exception. The theme was conceived in celebration of Valentine's Day. Most of the publicity surrounding the exhibit features jewelry since, "That's what people tend to associate with-and thus purchase on-Valentine's Day," said Alekna. However, true to the gallery's mission, the theme is explored through various mediums.

"This exhibit inspired us to create work that captures what we love," explained artist David VanderJagt. The artists create original new work for each exhibit. With a new exhibit every six to eight weeks, the gallery compels the artists to be quite prolific.

The theme of love is quite broad, and this is reflected in the artists' work.

The artwork features a variety of subjects: pets, landscapes, loved ones, wine glasses. Some pieces are more literal, such as Judy Miller's ceramic hearts, whereas others are more abstract, such as Alekna's delicate jewelry. The breadth of images keeps the viewer consistently engaged and invites him to contemplate the myriad expressions and manifestations of love in contemporary art.

"All of the work reflects our deep affection for art, for what we do," continued VanderJagt, whose earthy clay pots suggest a love of nature. VanderJagt chose to highlight the pots' organic quality while also underscoring the Valentine's Day theme by exhibiting his pots with flowers inside of them. The sweet smell of lavender and roses adds a sensorial experience to the visual feast.

The gallery hosts a reception open to the public to kick off each new exhibit. They usually serve wine and cheese, but at the "Tokens of Affection" reception they served champagne and chocolate, which they felt was more apropos.

The theme of the next exhibit is "Inside Outside," which opens in March. The gallery will open its sculpture garden over the summer. Visit their website for more information: www.lafayettegallery.net.

The Lafayette Gallery is a unique artist co-op comprised of 23 local artists. They rotate jobs for each exhibit: one person might curate an exhibit in the fall and then organize an opening night reception in the spring. All proceeds from the artwork go towards maintaining the gallery. Some of the artists have been part of the co-op for over a decade, while others joined as recently as this year.

Founded in 2000, the gallery is a local hotspot as well as a tourist destination. "People like to pop in after dining at Fiesta Square," said Dalia Alekna, one of the oldest members of the co-op. The gallery likes to keep their membership to about 25 artists, but there is often turnover. New artists are juried into the co-op after they've been reviewed by the members. When an artist applies, the committee assesses their current membership to determine what art form might be underrepresented.

The co-op seeks to sustain a balance of artists working in different mediums. All of their shows feature a variety of visual art: sculpture, jewelry, painting, pottery, glasswork, and photography.

The current "Tokens of Affection" exhibit is no



Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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