‘Art Works for AIDS’ contributes to healing process

“Trying now to write about the relation of my artwork to AIDS, I come face to face with the question of whether it is even a remotely appropriate activity to be making pictures when other people are sick, suffering and dying.

A picture comes to mind: I am sitting companionably by the bedside of a sick and dying friend, the situation is not hopeful, and I am drawing pictures. . . . Hopefully, my drawing provides a communication (communication) that recognizes, nourishes and gives an unspoken meaning to what we both are, in what otherwise appears to be a random and unbelievably painful experience.

“All this is, and not saying I am contributing to ‘Art Works for AIDS’ because it is an opportunity for me to give to the fight against AIDS what I have to offer as an artist: a picture.”

— Rachel Feferman

Review

Art Works for AIDS, exhibition and sale of local artists’ works, at Seattle Center Pavilion. Gala opening tonight by invitation only, open to public Sunday through Dec. 16.

The resulting exhibition is remarkable. The list of artists reads like a “Who’s Who” in the contemporary art scene in Seattle. What’s more, the participating artists gave their best. The art was donated outright, with money from the sale of the work benefiting two groups: the Northwest AIDS Foundation, an umbrella organization for Shanti, Seattle AIDS Support Group, In Touch and the Chicken Soup Brigade, and AIDS Housing of Washington, a group developing a 24-hour skilled nursing facility and adult day care for people living with AIDS.

The exhibit also included a room dedicated to those whose contributions to the arts community plans the second annual “A Day Without Art,” commemorating friends and colleagues who have died or are living with AIDS. Local observances include:

■ A candlelight procession beginning at the Broadway Market at Capitol Hill at 8 p.m.

■ 911 Arts/Media Center, the Seattle Art Museum and Cornish College of the Arts will present video screenings of work by Catherine Saalfeld. From 3-7 p.m., video focusing on her work with ACT UP will be shown at the art museum in Volunteer Park; admission is free. At 9 p.m., Saalfeld will show and discuss her videos dealing with women and AIDS at 911 Arts/Media Center, 117 Yale Ave. Admission is $5, 911 members $3.

■ A number of galleries will be closed, including the Mia Gallery, Greg Kucera, Cliff Michael, Fuller Ewold. COCA and Art Not Terminal.

■ Linda Hodges, Woodside-Braseth Gallery and The Silver Image Gallery will be open but will donate some of the day’s proceeds to AIDS organizations.

■ Other galleries and arts organizations — Raina Restaurant, the Henry Art Gallery, Linda Hodges Gallery, Security Pacific Gallery, AFLN and the King County Arts Commission — will display art in black.

■ On Monday, AFLN Gallery opens the “Heart to Art” show. Work created by people with AIDS as well as other donated art will be auctioned during the two-week exhibition. Proceeds will benefit the Chicken Soup Kitchen, Mercy House and the Rural AIDS Project Fund.

■ Some theaters — the Seattle Mime Theater, the Cabaret Dinner Society at Egg'seters, Cornish Dance Theater, Empty Space Theater and the Seattle Repertory Theater — will observe a moment of silence during Saturday performances. Alice B. Theatre will stop production for three minutes of silence.

On the Boards will have a discussion of homelessness and AIDS prior to the performance by the Los Angeles Poverty Department. New City Theater will be closed and dark except for a display of green and purple lights.

Art in Form Bookstore will be draped in black and will feature an evolving installation by John Leonard, Don Howe and Janet Fryberger.

Virginia Anderson arranged for the donation of the old Seattle Art Museum Pavilion space for Tom Blue’s “Plasteel,” donated thousands of dollars worth of framing services, and Anne Traver donated the design of the full-color catalog. (The sale of the $20)

“Peaceable Kingdom Revisited” is Alden Mason’s contribution to “Art Works for AIDS,” opening Sunday.

See ART, Next Page.
Art: Response from the artists astounds organizers of benefit

Mason’s painting, “Peaceable Kingdom Revisited,” was among the first to come in — unrolled and unzipped when we saw it,” said Repetowski. “He didn’t just send a good painting — he sent a great painting. And then we began to unroll the others, and it was like Christmas. It was like a birthday. We couldn’t believe what we were seeing.”

The show is beautiful. Most of the artists are well known, though there are a few surprises. Patricia Dahlem and Diane Dickerman are both little-known painters who donated small, glowing oils. Dahlem’s “Four Birds in a Bush” was in remembrance of an artist friend who died of AIDS. Maxine Martelli’s work is not often seen; her painting, “The Fifth Urn,” is downright gorgeous.

As a cross-section of the established artists of the area, the show offers a variety of styles, from realism to surrealism to abstraction to formalism, and the fine craftsmanship. There is more more than mere viewers, more than just a few who love art.

Some exceptions to that are among the strongest works in the show. Jacob Lawrence’s serigraph, “Revolutions on the Amistad,” shows a revolt on a slave ship. Michael Spafford’s painting of Persius holding the decapitated head of Medusa with his phallic tongue is also an exception — and appropriate to the show — as is Lauren Grossman’s mixed-media sculpture, “Romulus and Remus.”

On the whole, however, there is very little “wake-up” work in this show. It is aimed to comfort, not alarm. The greatest desire among the artists is that their work sells, said Repetowski. Most pieces are intimate and complete, easy to own and to live with.

AIDS has killed many friends,” wrote artist Mark Edward Fuller. “What it means is that the time of irony is over. The time of smart-assed, intellectual detachment is done. AIDS has brought us the gifts of renewed sight, renewed feeling. AIDS gives us back aesthetics. Beauty and presence are valuable again, because they are us.”

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