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Making a Statement

2020 'FL3TCH3R Exhibit' to offer gallery, virtual options

JOHNSON CITY – The year 2020 has been a year of social, political and health-related statements of many kinds. The annual “FL3TCH3R Exhibit: Social & Politically Engaged Art” at East Tennessee State University’s Reece Museum is a visual art forum inspired by and tailored for just that kind of expression.

Fittingly, the 2020 exhibition will be a hybrid, part in person and part virtual. “We believe the hybrid, virtual way in which the exhibit will function this year conforms with its basis – reflecting social and political effects of how we are living through the 2020 pandemic,” say “FL3TCH3R Exhibit” co-directors Wayne, Barb and Carrie Dyer.

Established in 2013, in memory of ETSU graphic design student Fletcher Dyer, son of attorney Barb Dyer and now-emeritus ETSU Art & Design professor Wayne Dyer, “FL3TCH3R” has become an international juried exhibit with 249 entries this year from nearly 100 artists from around the world.

Selections for this year’s exhibit – which runs Monday, Oct. 5-Friday, Dec. 11 – were made by juror Carlton Wilkinson, a Nashville photographer, gallery proprietor and international speaker and lecturer. Entries for the exhibit run the gamut of visual art forms: fiber, jewelry/metals, painting, photography, digital, sculpture, printmaking, video, graphic design, ceramics and 2D and 3D mixed media.

The “FL3TCH3R Exhibit” is always an indicator of artists’ social and political concerns, says Reece Museum Exhibition Coordinator Spenser Brenner. “As artist participation has increased since the first exhibition in 2013, so has the scope of issues being addressed,” Brenner observes. “Considering the current state of national and global politics, coupled with social justice issues and the ongoing pandemic, I’m sure artists have a lot to communicate.”

The 2020 entries and selections, “more than ever before,” says Barb Dyer, “reflected key prevalent issues surrounding the 2020 election and the present administration, as well as concerns of people worldwide.”

Entries illustrated a range of subjects, including Black Lives Matter and systemic racism, police brutality toward people of color, protests, the COVID-19 pandemic, first-responder heroes, the 2016 election result, oppression, slavery and the environment.

“The entries submitted were some of the strongest and most powerful visual narratives of social/politically engaged artworks ever received by the exhibit,” says Fletcher’s sister Carrie Dyer, a graphic designer and design professor at High Point University, N.C.

This year, the exhibit co-directors are making their own statement, adding an award for artwork focusing on Black Lives Matter.

Other awards, include the best-in-show awards and memorial awards, established in memory of former ETSU Art & Design Chair Jack Schrader; former ETSU Vice President of Academic Affairs and arts supporter Robert J. Alfonso; Dorothy Carson, mother of graphic designer David Carson; and the Sammie L. Nicely Appalachian Award in memory of the beloved regional artist.

In addition, former “FL3TCH3R” juror, physician and visual artist Dr. Eric Avery, supports the Avery Healthcare and the Arts Award, while a portion of the entry fees also funds the Fletcher Hancock Dyer BFA Graphic Design Scholarship Award given annually to an ETSU Art & Design student.

While the 2020 exhibit can be viewed in person during the museum’s operating hours, this year’s awards ceremony will be recorded on Nov. 5 by the Dyers and Reece Museum staff and posted on the Reece Museum website and social media platforms.

Also this year, because of the pandemic, the juror’s talk by Wilkinson will be virtual, recorded Nov. 5 and posted at www.etsu.edu/reece. The talk will include a walk-through of the exhibit with Wilkinson’s commentary.

Visitation to the exhibition, however, will not go virtual, opening to the public Oct. 5 at the museum on Stout Drive on ETSU’s campus. “The Reece has implemented a number of measures to keep visitors, students and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Reece Director Randy Sanders. “These measures include wearing a face covering, a one-way system of navigating the museum’s galleries and hallways, having hand sanitizer available at the front entrance and maintaining social distancing guidelines.”

Museum hours are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. “We encourage visitors to call 423-439-4392 or email us at reeceemus@etsu.edu to plan a visit ahead of time,” Sanders says. “This will help museum staff maintain social distance guidelines.”

The virtual events will not only keep patrons and artists safer, but they also open up new possibilities in the reach of the “FL3TCH3R” legacy. “In many ways, the exhibit may be accessible to more people than usual due to efforts by the Reece Museum staff to share the exhibit and events online,” Wayne Dyer says. “We hope that these plans add strength and awareness of the wonderful works accepted this year.

“We are confident that this year’s exhibit will be powerful.”

For more information about Fletcher Dyer, visit <http://fletcherdyer.com/about.html>. For more information about the exhibit, visit <http://www.FL3TCH3Rexhibit.com> and for Reece Museum, visit www.etsu.edu/reece or call 423-439-439

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For more information on Mary B. Martin School of the Arts, visit www.etsu.edu/martin or call 423-439-TKTS (8587). For disability accommodations, call the ETSU Office of Disability Services at 423-439-8346.