

Latino Arts Festival displays local art

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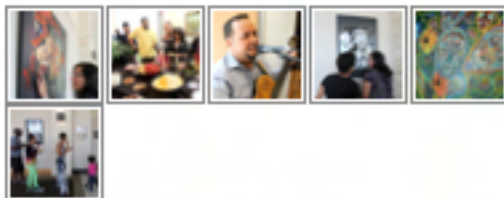
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Catrina Rawson

Latino Art Festival

Elizabeth Manzano looks over a painting done by the artist Rhea Brown as a part of the opening reception of the Latino Art Festival, Saturday, September 1, 2012 at the Killeen Civic and Conference Center. The festival showcases the artwork through the month of September.



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Sarah Rafique | Herald staff writer | 0 comments

Posted on September 1, 2012 by Sarah Rafique

Although Joan Kelley's body was weak, her hands were able to create art using the creativity of her mind.

Kelley, a member of the board of trustees for the Killeen Civic Art Guild, always enjoyed painting but didn't pursue it until she was in recovery after being diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago.

Two of Kelley's pieces will adorn the walls of the Killeen Civic and Conference Center this month during the Killeen League of United Latin American Citizens's second annual Latino Arts Festival.

Lillie Agüero, chairperson for the Latino Art Festival committee, said she contacted artists within the area and throughout Texas to display their work as part of the festival.

"Most of the art is by local artists," she said. "All art has such feelings, but I have seen such tremendous depths in these artists"

Rhea Brown, of Harker Heights, whose "El Baile Hermosa" is one of 24 Latin-inspired artworks by 19 artists, started focusing on art when she was pregnant with her first child.

She decided to quit medical school and follow a passion of hers, which allowed her to stay at home with her daughter.

"It's something I can do while spending time with my family," Brown said. "I love to draw. I love to paint. I just never thought I'd be doing it professionally."

Brown generally paints portraits of women based on live models. Inspiration for her colorful Latin-themed airbrush/acrylic/glass bead piece came from a Puerto Rican model.

"She wore a tradition dress and it just came out so beautiful," said Brown, who has been painting for 11 years.

The piece took her less than 10 hours over a two-day period.

"I don't like to spend that long on paintings," she said. "I've spent 30 or 40 hours before, but I'm just getting into an abstract phase where I don't like to take that long."

Brown described her piece as a mix between abstract and realism, which displayed a combination of different textures and colors.

"I like to stay true to the body form. I like for you to be able to see that everything is in proportion, but at the same time I like to have things flow out of the norm."

Kelley likes to stray from the norm of watercolor and acrylics, creating recycled art instead. She uses anything from trash found along the side of the road to nuts and bolts in a friend's garage.

"I go looking for rustic metals and dig in ditches," she said. "My husband got mad at me one day for going through the dump."

Many people don't realize their talents until they try, Kelley said. "It was just something that I knew I wanted to do, but I never really had the time."