

The Artists of Golden Belt, squarely on display

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BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN

dvaughan@heraldsun.com; 419-6563

DURHAM – The artists in the studios at Golden Belt Arts talk about their work to each other, ask questions and enjoy a festive beverage on occasion at the end of the workday. There are those who work in their studios on weekdays, the night shift who come in after their day jobs, and the weekends are usually busy with visitors. Since the renovated factory buildings owned by Scientific

Properties opened studio spaces in 2008, artists have had a separate, yet collective place to create.

For the first time, the 41 artists have an opportunity to all work together on an art exhibit and sale that benefits the Center for Child & Family Health in Durham.

The Golden Belt Arts exhibit and benefit sale, called “Twelve by Twelve,” will feature more than 200 works on 12-inch-by-12-inch canvases by at least 30 artists. Each piece will be sold for \$200, and at least 12 percent of sales will be donated to the Center for Child & Family Health. CCFH’s programs include the East Durham Children’s Initiative and Healthy Families.

There’s a preview Thursday night from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. with a \$25 ticket, or free entrance from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday as part of Third Fridays. Thursday attendees will have first pick of the art and listen to a string quartet of KidZNotes faculty.

“What’s cool about the event is we’ve never done 12 by 12 before, so when they’re gone, they’re gone,” said artist Marjorie Pierson. “It’s a way to get original art for a relatively low price,” she said. Artists have been working on their pieces for the past two months.

The studio space in Golden Belt Arts Building 3 is at capacity, with a waiting list. Artist Heather Gordon is also the artist liaison. Her acrylic pieces in “Twelve by Twelve” will depict her analysis of letter sounds in love poems, translated into color grids. She also has an exhibit up now at the Durham Arts Council.

It was Gordon's idea for "Twelve by Twelve" in Durham, having been involved in similar shows in other states. The event poster was designed by artisan printer Brian Allen with a letterpress.

Pierson said that a lot of the artists didn't know about the Center for Child & Family Health, so it has been a pleasure to explain.

CCFH executive director of advancement Eileen Watts Welch said that the event gives them an opportunity for a holiday celebration as well as raising awareness of trauma care for children. The center is a collaboration between Duke University, UNC Chapel Hill, N.C. Central University and Child & Parent Support Services.

Pierson has offered to donate some of her art to the organization for its lobby, to offer a soothing image for parents and children while they wait. Her artistic work is photography of wetlands and water printed on canvas. Pierson grew up in Southern Louisiana and documents the loss of wetlands in vibrant blues, greens and browns.

"My style is very painterly, experiential. I want people to feel they're in the photographs," she said. She also wants to get them to care about wetlands. She shoots with a 35mm from boats, on piers or in the water. Duke University bought one of her pieces and gave it to the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this past week.

Pierson hopes those that come to "Twelve by Twelve" will come meet the artists, see their work and buy directly from them. The 200 pieces of art, mostly paintings, will be hung all along the building's hallways.

Artist Warren Hicks said the square format is good for abstract. His contributions started as one large painting he hated, so he cut it up, touched it up and framed them. Hicks will help hang his and the other artists' work early next week.

Artist Christine Long said Golden Belt Arts is a wonderful cultural resource in Durham. She spent 27 years as an intensive care nurse at Duke and has seen the impact of trauma on families, so is thrilled to work with CCFH.

Long's realistic oil paintings in "Twelve by Twelve" include orchids at different times of day, leaves and snow scenes from the Eno River in black and white. She shares a large studio space with two other artists, and they all benefit from the natural light of the old factory's tall windows. She restores 19th century paintings, so other artists often come to her for guidance.

Gordon, the artist liaison, said they have all levels of artists in the studios and what they really want are artists who are on fire and want to be in the studio on a regular basis.

“We want them to come play with us,” Gordon said.

On Thursday and Friday, the public has a chance to come to the East side of downtown to view art, buy art and see artists at play – and benefit the Center for Child & Family Health, too.

Go&Do

WHAT: The Artists of Golden Belt present ‘Twelve by Twelve’ benefit art sale and exhibition

WHEN: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday (ticketed sneak peek, admission \$25), and 6-9 p.m. Friday (Free, part of Third Fridays)

WHERE: Golden Belt Arts, Building 3

807 E. Main St., Durham

INFORMATION: www.goldenbeltarts.com

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