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Mendham students' works join teachers' at art gallery

76 pieces on display at Chester exhibit

BY ZENAIDA MENDEZ
DAILY RECORD

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CHESTER -- Among the artwork on display at the Second Story Gallery, Candice Bancheri's "Native Stares" immediately engages the observer with the subjects, a woman and child from Costa Rica staring back from a boat in a thicket.

"It creates this tension of people looking at you, the viewer, and wondering 'What are we doing here?'" explained Margaret Beach, gallery owner.

Bancheri, who is a Mendham High School sophomore, created the oil on canvas based upon a haunting photo her mom took while visiting Costa Rica about four years ago.

She had planned to submit it to an art contest, but then she learned the submissions were supposed to be self-portraits.

Bancheri's disappointment quickly faded when her art teacher, Jessica Perry, invited students to submit their work for a show titled "Teachers and Students" at the Second Story Gallery.

Beach recently opened the gallery in the Chester Shopping Mall, at the corner of Main Street and Route 206, and thought involving local students and their art teachers in such a show would be a good way to introduce the gallery to the area. The show, which runs through March 4, features the works of

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Gallery owner Margaret Beach stands in front of a collage by Jessica Perry, an art teacher at Mendham High School, called 'In My Eyes.' Art teachers and their students submitted works for inclusion in the Chester gallery.

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Mendham High School art teachers Harry Douglas, Onelio Marrero, Jessica Perry and Michael Wolf and their students.

There are 76 pieces on display, including works from Beach, and some are for sale. They include landscapes, self-portraits, and portraits done in various mediums such as oils, acrylics, charcoals, and digital prints.

It's the first time Bancheri's art is displayed anywhere outside of her home, she said.

"I was glad to have this," Bancheri said of the show. "It was good, especially for my parents because they've seen me working on it but I'm usually like 'Close the door!' and 'Don't come in!' So they got to see it up."

Of her peers' and teachers' work, Bancheri said "everyone was so good.

"It wasn't about accuracy," she explained. "It was about style. It was about different aspects. You could see that everyone was different and amazing in their own way."

Mendham High Schools offers its student an introductory, full-year art course and its sequence, Art II. Both focus on drawing, painting, printmaking and how to work with three-dimensional art, Douglas said. The school also offers painting, graphics and art history courses. "Studio art" is the culminating course of all of those, and that generally is taken senior year, Douglas said.

This year, for the first time, the school additionally offered semesterized courses including pottery, digital photography, drawing, and sculpture.

"I think they [students] were happy to have the opportunity to show," he said. "They enjoyed going to see the show, mixing with the other exhibitors, and actually seeing how the work looked up on the wall, when it was a step removed from actually making it, to see how it presented and to hear what other people had to say about it."

"I think it's really cool just because I've had maybe one thing exhibited before, but nothing I really felt good about doing," said senior Jason Lane.

Lane's pieces include "Light at the End," an oil on canvas, and "Stranger than Fiction," an optical art oil on canvas that speaks to the realities of war.

"I think students exhibiting their work really makes them feel good and pushes them to work harder and do more work," Lane added, "and everybody likes recognition."

Beach invited the Mendham High School art teachers to display their and their students' work at Second Story after seeing some of the educators' pieces on display at the county's Administration &



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Artwork by Mendham High School students and teachers is displayed at the Second Story Gallery in Chester.

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"I saw how good the teachers were so I figured there's a good chance that if they're that good the students will be good too," Beach said.

She wasn't disappointed.

"The talent that you see in this room is so cool," she said.

"You see the creativity here," she said. "For the future of the world, that's really important."

Marrero said he and Douglas have wanted, for years, to do this type of show but it's been difficult to find the space because often the galleries must be booked years in advance. So when Beach contacted the instructors about such an opportunity, they were excited.

"Some art teachers don't like their students to see their work, but we don't mind it," Marrero explained. "We think it's actually good because it shows them that we're not just doing theory; we practice it and they see we have a passion for it.

At Mendham High School, the teachers hope to impart upon their students at least a basic understanding and lifelong appreciation of art, and they also try to show students that pursuing it is a viable career option.

"It's so hard to get kids in this demographic to go into art because everybody has to be a lot more successful, have something high-paying," Marrero said, "and the mistake is that a lot of people think if you're going to go into art, you're going to be a starving artist.

"It's not like that," he added. "So I try to impart that to as many kids as possible -- they can make something out of this."

Zenaida Mendez can be reached at (973) 989-0652 or zmendez@gannett.com.

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