

pulse

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VISUAL
Art

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The right 'Directions'

By Cara Patterson

Barrett Art Center's annual juried exhibit gives visitors a chance to look into the modern face of art.

At the opening of the Barrett Art Center's 21st annual "New Directions" exhibit on the evening of Oct. 22, I had the privilege of taking a quick tour with Steven Evans, the juror for the event. Evans combed through more than 1,400 entries to select the work of 55 artists for the exhibition. The tour was my chance to gain a brief insight into what he had picked to represent the direction of art today, and why.

Evans is the assistant director for the Dia Art Foundation, and he oversees Dia: Beacon Riggio Galleries. His focus at Dia is nonrepresentational art, but he says he wanted the Barrett show to reflect a broad range of practices in the art world. "We're in a diverse part of New York, with a wide audience," said Evans. For this reason, it was important to him that the exhibit reflect a breadth of media and techniques.

Evans began our tour with a piece located in the center of the middle room on the City of Poughkeepsie gallery's first floor. Even without such a central location, the work, by New York City-based artist Ezra Silverman, was hard to miss. It resembled a large glass shadow box similar to the kind used by collectors. Inside were dreadlock-sized twists of hair lined up for display, some encircled with rings of semi-precious stones. "Ezra Silverman uses his own hair as a formal, sculptural device," Evans explained.

The use of hair, Evans said, also comments on identity. To elaborate, he pointed to two portraits hanging about a foot off the wall on either side of the glass case. They looked like sketches of a man's head and shoulders crafted with a few bold strokes of a luminescent gold pen. Strangely, the ink, or paint, was suspended between two plates of glass, exposing the wall behind them - without any paper visible in the frame. Evans

"New Directions '05: 21st Annual National Juried Contemporary Art Exhibition"

Barrett Art Center, 55 Noxon St., Poughkeepsie

Through Nov. 19

Hours: Thursdays & Fridays, 11 a.m.-

5 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.;

and by appointment.

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explained that the portraits were drawn not in pen, but in strands of the artists' hair.

In the next room, we looked at "Trace," a sculpture made from medical imaging film that resembled intricate pinwheels of a few inches in diameter, each mounted onto the wall in neat rows of five by five. The vein-like spokes of the wheels, in shades of red and metallic black, reminded me of diagrams of the nervous system that might have been sliced out of a medical book. Evans said the work touched thematically on the body, as well as the interface of art and design, a tension that, according to Evans, existed in art throughout the 20th century.

In keeping with his goal of showing many different media and practices, Evans selected several photographs for inclusion. He said he admired the composition and the rich ambiguity of a photograph by Oz Lubling, a New York City-based artist who was in attendance. The photo, which was shot with a Mamiya 7 medium format camera, shows the edge of a dingy pier from an overhead angle. Two men on the deck stand close to the water, and one man raises his arm toward the other's shoulder in a moment of friendship, brotherhood, hatred or love - it's hard to tell which. Lubling later explained that the work is part of a larger series about intimacy and distance, and he prefers to leave the interpretation up to the viewer, as ambiguity lends to the meaning and pleasure of the work.