

Finding Themselves

Found Objects Are Core of Art Show

By **DONNA KELLY** | THE LEDGER

WINTER HAVEN
In objects we encounter every day — tin foil, compact discs, books, beer bottle caps, rusty metal, iron skillets, fabric — an artist may see a form of beauty or a message, and these objects become art.

Ridge Art Association celebrates the unusual use of the usual in the 2008 Art From Found Objects Show on display 12:30 to 4 p.m. today through Friday in the Ridge Art Gallery, 210 Cypress Gardens Blvd.

Held every two or three years, the Art From Found Objects Show is one of Executive Director Christy Hemenway's favorite events

on the Ridge Art Association calendar.

"I love it because a whole show of nothing but mixed-media pieces forces people to look at it — to really stop, observe and really try to figure out what that artist's statement is," said Hemenway, adding that often people won't stop and study found object pieces when they are included in shows with more traditional work.

Vilas Tonape, who recently joined Polk Community College as a professor of art, juried and judged the show, selecting 62 works by 29 artists.

"I made my selection of 10 winning pieces based on themes and concepts.

First of all, I looked for how strongly and faithfully an idea or poetry is visually expressed, and that the vehicle of expression is found object in a true sense, conceptually. My own educational and cultural background also played an important role in the process," said Tonape, a native of Mumbai, India, in his judge's statement.

Best of Show was awarded to "The Dress" by Tinia. Created by bras of different styles, sizes and colors, the piece was the artist's reaction to her recent bout with breast cancer.

"The Dress," the top winner, a work based on the

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EDWIN RYAN BAILEY of Winter Haven piece titled "Working Days Are Over."

Arts

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statistics of breast cancer victims, was immensely emotive." Tonape said. "But my response to it was more from an Indic perspective. Its form and material is its Shakti, meaning sacred energy. A Hindu concept of the divine feminine aspect sometimes referred to as 'The Divine Mother,' Shakti represents the active, dynamic principals of feminine power."

Tinia submitted three pieces based on her breast cancer experience. Using items she saved from her surgeries, she created the pieces not only as a way to deal with her cancer but to encourage people to talk about the disease. Included in each piece was a written explanation of the cancer-related item and her feelings about it.

"I was trying to put across some of the emotions that I experienced to allow people to better understand the technical part of breast cancer and the statistics that really affect people that go through it," Tinia said.

She was pleased when all three pieces were accepted into the show and ecstatic when "The Dress" took Best of Show, with a \$700 prize.

"There are a lot of really good artists in this show," she said.

Tinia, who is an award-winning abstract artist, describes the Art From Found Objects Show as a growing experience for artists.

"The Found Objects Show is so different — so many people challenge themselves for it," Tinia said. "You wonder what these artists were thinking when they put together their found object piece. Not every piece has an explanation like mine."

Other awards winners were:

■ Second Place, \$500, "Circle of Life," Karen Woodington, Lakeland.

■ Third Place, \$300, "Trying to Communicate," Nancy Strange Seib, Cocoa Beach.

■ Awards of Excellence,

\$100; "Crime of Passion," Greg Jones, Lakeland; "Sherwin Williams Meets Mother Nature," Linda Knight, Daytona; "Mr. Skillet Does Vaudeville," Rick Dillen, Melbourne.

■ Honorable Mention, \$50;

"Witness," Grace Leal, Cocoa Beach; "Heartbreak Hotel," Barbara Lucke, Winter Haven; "Image Generator," James Oleson, Brooksville; "Power Games," Kathy Omeara, Port Orange.



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"THE DRESS" is a mixed-media piece by artist Tinia of Winter Haven. It won Best of Show.