The Mary Jean Thomson Collection

Robert Lostutter "Bee Hummingbird and Long-Tailed Sylph", 1982, watercolor, 3" x 6½"

August 24 - September 30, 1990
Community Gallery of Art • College of Lake County
The Mary Jean Thomson Collection

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Opening Reception
Friday, August 24 • 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Music By: Flute A Deux

On the surface, one might think Mary Jean Thomson’s collection has nothing in common. The collection began 25 years ago as a case of love at first sight. Over the years Thomson has repeatedly experienced the exhilaration of discovering a work that strikes a chord with her aesthetic sensibilities. Thomson has chosen works which encompass a wide spectrum of contemporary art. The collection reaches two different poles of visual expression with many nuances in between. A key to this collector’s eclectic tastes is suggested in her own artistic endeavors.

Refined craftsmanship and serene composition are characteristic of some pieces in the collection while, at the other end of the spectrum, there are pieces which could only be described as raw and aggressive in both subject matter and use of materials.
The meticulously crafted, tranquil works range from the realism of Jeanette Pasin Sloan’s “Silver Bowls” to the fanciful bird-men of Robert Lostutter. Also included in this category would be New York artist Julie Graham’s meditative abstraction with its cloud-like forms.

In contrast to these are works which scream out at the viewer. The garters and shards of glass in Nickich-Loving’s “Come Play in my Lace” make the construction as dangerous as it is seductive. Suellen Rocca, an original member of the “Harry Who”, is represented by a menacing Rorschach-like drawing.

The collection also contains a few examples by self-taught Outsider artists. Howard Finster, a back-woods minister from Georgia, praises the Lord and Coca-Cola in the same naive painting. Joseph E. Yoakum’s “Columbia River Near Pasco, Washington” is a dream-like terrain. His primitive landscapes were an inspiration to some of the early Chicago Imagists.
A number of pieces in the collection are distinctly from a women's perspective. Hollis Sigler’s “The Manifestation of Her Problem” depicts a clothes strewn bathroom, a woman silhouetted in the shower, and a dress hanging neatly on the door. The viewer is confronted by the effects but not the cause of her “problem.” The several probing self-portraits by Audrey Niffenegger deal with themes of vanity and love.

Mary Jean Thomson’s own artistic creations are boldly stated, yet highly personalized abstractions of figures and faces. These works reflect the collector’s affinity for meticulous craftsmanship while maintaining a certain raw edge. Her works are like strands that hold the gems together. They give the viewer further insight into the sensibilities that work to unite this collection.

This collection brings together a diversity of works; while some command attention, others offer quiet contemplation. Its broad base appeals to many different artistic passions. It is truly a collection for everyone.

Steve Jones, Gallery Curator
College of Lake County  
19351 West Washington Street  
Grayslake, Illinois 60030-1198

Gallery Hours:  
8:00 am-9:30 pm Mon-Thu  
8:00 am-4:30 pm Fri  
10:00 am-2:00 pm Sat  
1:00 pm-5:00 pm Sun

Closed  
August 25, 26  
September 1, 2 & 3

The Gallery is located in the west wing of the main building.