

Celebrating the Human Form? Go Figure!

By Robyn Roberts

Do you celebrate your shape? Often we are so preoccupied hiding and camouflaging various parts of our bodies that we are not left with much to rejoice in, let alone “celebrate.” Every day we are bombarded with advertisements featuring highly Photoshopped images of idealized models and actors. While people spend a great deal of money to look “perfect”, most often they are left disappointed in what their reflection shows in the mirror. The way an artist interprets and presents the human form’s various shapes and contours is always a thing of beauty, no matter what the person’s supposed “flaw.”

Throughout centuries, artists have studied the human figure and used the body as a source of inspiration. Since prehistoric times the human figure has been the subject for art. One cannot help but think of the saying “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” when either viewing idealist artists’ interpretations of a beautiful body or brutally honest realistic artwork; both illustrate an exercise of acute observation.

Since 40,000 BCE to contemporary times, from cave paintings to elaborate sculptures, artists have been drawn to capture the essence of our anatomy, and *Go Figure: A Celebration of the Human Form* continues the tradition. The juried exhibition, at the Lighthouse ArtCenter Museum in Tequesta, Florida, glorifies the human figure through multiple mediums. Collectors, artists and visitors will see pastels, paintings, drawings and the work of sculptors who interpret the mass, geometry and perspective of human anatomy highlighting the plethora of diverse human shapes. Throughout the exhibition one will notice the variation in the environment the artists have chosen to set their subjects.

An eye-catching oil painting by Kris Davis depicts a relaxed form floating in water. Entitled “Breathless,” it highlights the sheer fabric of a woman’s dress as it effortlessly clings

beautifully to her body and seems to move with the water. Davis captures much more than just correct human anatomy, focusing on sunlight cascading through the fabric and water.

Another work of art which plays with stunning light is the "Morning Swim" by Karen Lewis, which won Third Place. In the oil painting, a young woman's graceful fingers lightly graze the water as reflections delicately beam back at her.

Winning "Best of Show" is "Reflection," an oil on canvas by Fay Teller Panico. This realistic painting features segments of women's bodies, highlighting their breasts and the smooth soft curves of their stomachs.

Illustrating another spectrum of artistic medium is a dramatic black and white linocut by Lauris Aguera-Areas called "The Bath," which won First Place in the exhibition. Both Panico and Aguera-Areas' works depict women's bodies, and each artist provides an interesting perspective. The high contrast and texture of "The Bath" and its subject matter of uninhibited old women in a public bath is wildly different from the subdued painting "Reflection," but both pieces possess an impressive mastery.

The bronze sculpture "Escape," by internationally renowned artist Mehri Danielpour, memorializes the victims of the 1928 Florida hurricane, but it could represent escape from any disaster.

Another superb work grabbing viewer's gazes is by photographer Durga Garcia; it is a black and white photograph on sugarcane paper called "Male Torso Study." Garcia's masterful lighting highlights a male bodybuilder's muscular curves and won the "Executive Director's Choice Award."

Katie Deits, the ArtCenter's Executive Director and a Master Photographer in a former career, selected Garcia's study. "It is more than the shapely muscles that catch the viewer's eye, but

how the commanding lighting is skillfully placed showing every ripple and pore, along with his perfectly defined profile," said Ms. Deits.

The diversification also pertains to the materials used by the artists, where viewers will find almost every medium in this exhibition. From oil and acrylic paintings to photography and linocuts, sculptures made from ceramics and natural materials such as natural twigs, and even a mixed media sculpture by Gerri Aurre hanging from the ceiling. Such diversity in an exhibition can prove difficult when trying to pick a show favorite. At the opening of *Go Figure*, exhibition judge Dr. Nazaré Feliciano, a professor of art at Palm Beach State College told the audience, "To judge art works is a demanding challenge, especially when one is in the presence of truly exceptional work, which is the case in this art exhibition. I did my best to recognize the art works that presented professional technical ability and challenging compositions. If you did not win a prize do not get discouraged, keep developing your talent and your work will be recognized." Further recognizing the magnificence of the art in *Go Figure*, she added, "To me, you are all winners, your art adds beauty to the world."

Go Figure: A Celebration of the Human Form is an opportunity for people to recognize the beauty in diversity, and that because we are not all the same, the world is truly more beautiful.

The exhibition runs through October 25, 2014. Museum hours are Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free to ArtCenter members and \$5 Monday through Friday for nonmembers; Saturdays are free to all. As part of the national **Blue Star Museum** initiative, free admission to active military and their families is offered throughout the year with valid military I.D.