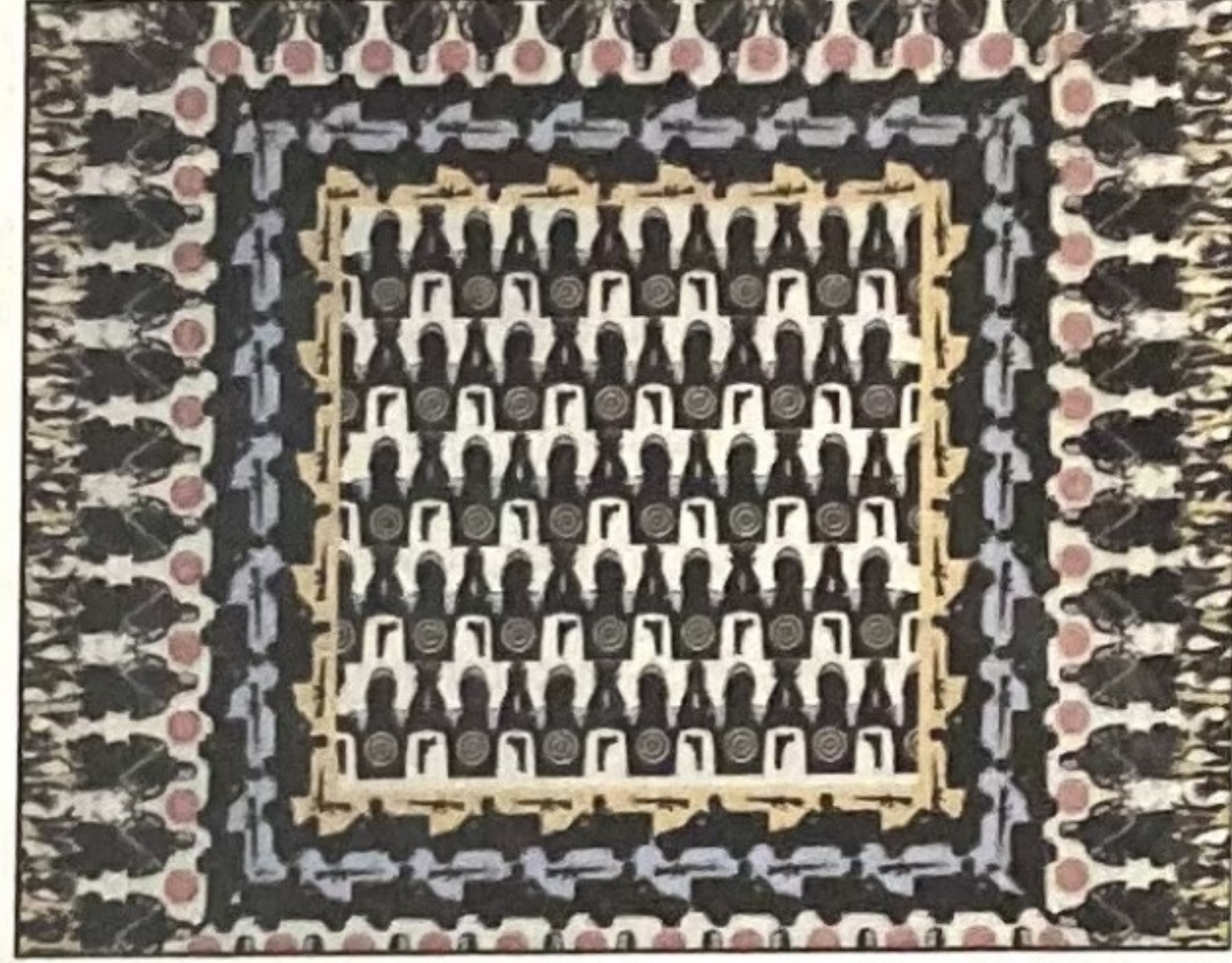


"In the Test Kitchen" by Denise Shaw



"The Amazing Race" by Craig Billings



"We are All targets-Don't Shoot" by Margi Weir

Visual Opinions

Social injustices take center stage in latest STC exhibit

BY NANCY MOYER
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Whenever mankind first started ranting about social injustices, art was probably there — or at least nearby. Using art as a public forum for social commentary in this country began in 1754, when Benjamin Franklin's "Join or Die" cartoon about colonial unification appeared in the "Pennsylvania Gazette." Since then, cartoonists have expressed opinions on urgent political issues of the day and social commentary gradually spilled over into the fine arts arena. Visual opinions have impact.

South Texas College Annual Human Rights Art Exhibit is STC's tenth year of helping to increase human injustice awareness. This national juried exhibition is once again thoughtful and meaningful, bringing our attention to issues that should matter in our lives. Displayed in the Cooper Center, this year's exhibit seems to have less artwork than last year, but according to exhibition coordinator and curator, Richard Lubben, it is not so. "No, it is the same number," he assured me, "but the formats are smaller; smaller works take less exhibit space." He and I surmised that maybe escalating shipping costs were financially persuading artists to work smaller for out-of-town shows.

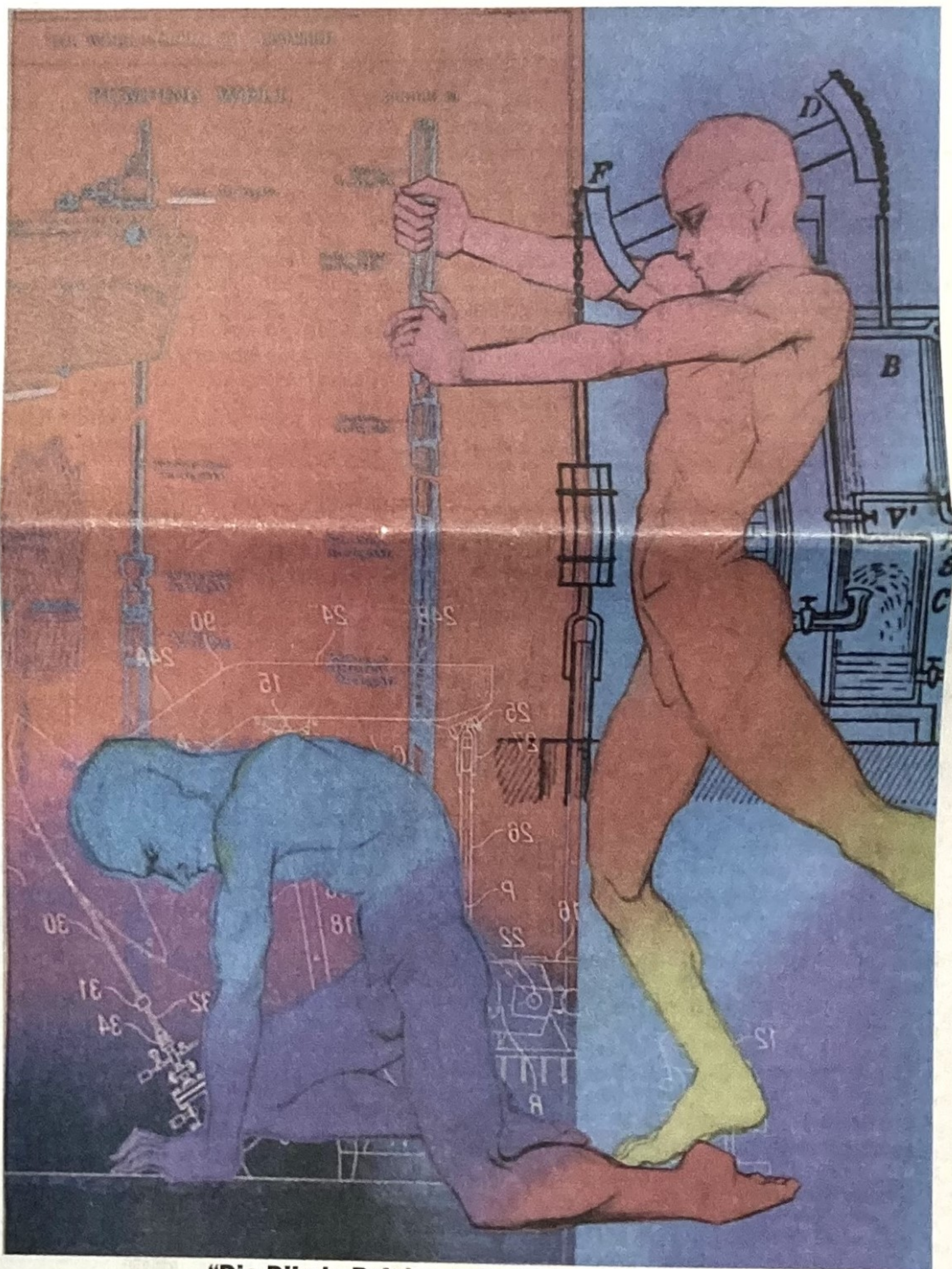
This year's choice of social concerns seems broader than in years past. "The first exhibit ten years ago was very narrow," offered Lubben. "It was about war and was a quick exhibit designed to supplement a conference. The second year it was opened up to human trafficking for that special conference

and then the third exhibit was about general human rights. During those first three years it changed a lot, but overall, it goes along with what's happening in the world." This year includes issues about gun control, oil control, lethal injections, undocumented working conditions, migrants, bans on education and repeated stupid actions of the human race.

All the works are good. The Best in Show, "We Are All Targets: Don't Shoot," a print by Margi Weir, speaks about gun control. Weir lives in Detroit and has personally experienced the effects of gun violence in her community. Since the State of Texas may allow handguns on campus, this topic should resonate with us. Denise Shaw's painting, "The Test Kitchen," brings our attention to capital punishment and its substandard lethal injection process. Shaw symbolizes our officials' irresponsibility of insuring a correct and standard drug by showing different party "cocktails;" this work may also comment on Big Pharma's often poorly tested drugs that result in permanent side effects and death instead of the promised cure.

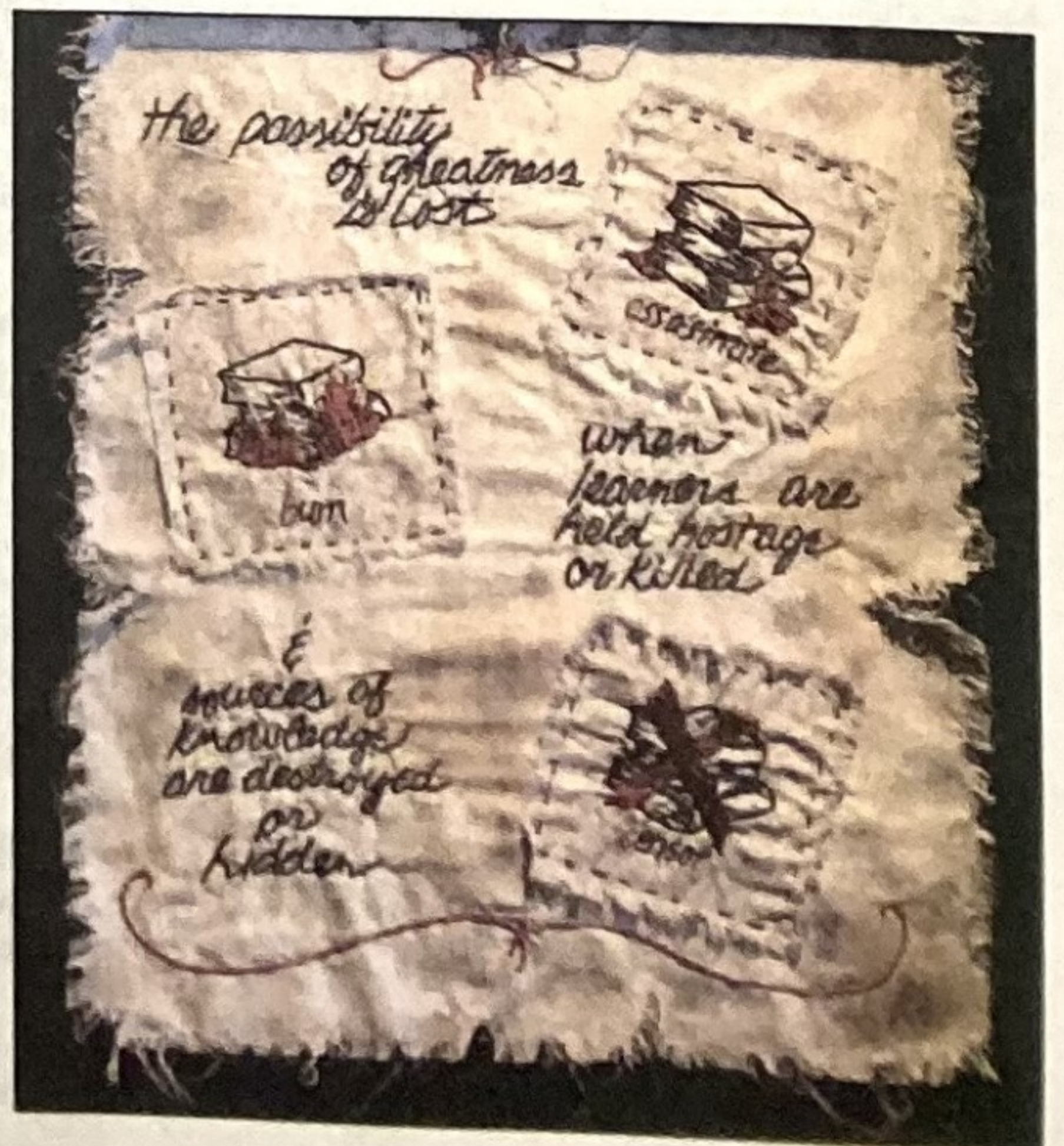
Who produces this kind of art? Lubben explained that this group of dedicated social rights artists breaks off into two types. "Some artists have something that's of special concern to them that they generally focus on," he said, "and then there's another group of artists who are very current and react to what's happening today. We also have the backbone group who always submit work; they create the foundation for the exhibit."

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art at UTPA, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com



"Dio Dija la Palabra y Se Hicieron las Bestias (God said the Word and Made the Beasts)" by Andrés Peralta

"The Bad A B Cs" by Future Akins



SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART EXHIBIT
WHEN 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
 Monday through Thursday, through April 24
WHERE STC Cooper Center, 3202 W. Pecan Blvd., McAllen
CALL (956) 872-2541
EMAIL rdlubben@southtexascollege.edu