

ROCHESTER CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

Hundreds of artworks go on view Friday at RoCo

Robin L. Flanigan

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Rochester Contemporary Art Center's 28th Annual Members Exhibition is the largest yet by far, a community celebration of artists—380 of them—from the region and beyond.

"In a way, it's beginning to be like the [annual] 6x6 project, where we're outgrowing our space for it," says Bleu Cease, RoCo's executive director and curator. "It's a wonderful tradition, incredibly varied. There's every medium."

The exhibition, which opens Friday, features one piece of work from each artist. Most live in the region, and some are well-known in the local arts community, such as Robert Ernst Marx, Nancy Jurs and Bill Stewart. A few other artists come from outside the state, and one hails from Italy.

Members Exhibition

At the Members Exhibition, nearly 20 awards will be presented, including a Members Choice Award and a Mayor's Choice Award.

On Dec. 15 and Jan. 4 are "The Days the Artists Spoke," in which artists sign up to speak for 10 minutes about their work in the exhibition or their creative practice.

Gwendolyn Davies from Rochester is participating for the second time with "Self-Portrait: Red"—a 24" x 36" poster print that is part of a series titled Claiming Space. The work is a photograph of herself in a red dress against a snowy backdrop. The poster has been folded and creased and is tacked to the wall with push pins.

"It's to reference the days going all the way back to the pinup girl," she says, "and all the ways images are created around what an ideal woman looks like and how she interacts with the people and culture around her."

Davies hopes her work contributes to a community conversation around



Sea Scape 2017 by Joscelyne Andree Sarkis. ROCO STAFF



Gwendolyn Davies' Self-Portrait: Red, 2018. PROVIDED



"Sneak peek" installation view of the 28th Annual Members Exhibition at Rochester Contemporary Art Center. ROCO STAFF

media images that help make young girls self-conscious about their bodies.

"I'm a plus-size woman, and I want to say it's OK to accept your body and live a fulfilled life," she says. "I want other women to have a space to step out and be confident with who they are."

Farmworkers Exhibit

Also opening Friday at RoCo is a traveling exhibit titled *Hand Picked: Art*

If You Go

What: 28th Annual Members Exhibition

When: Opens Friday with reception from 6 to 9 p.m.; exhibition ends Jan. 13.

Where: Rochester Contemporary Art Center, 137 East Ave.

Cost: \$2/free for members

More: rochestercontemporary.org

Expression of Farmworkers Who Feed Us, featuring 30 works of art—including drawings of faces and hands, and poetry — by migrant workers.

Hand Picked: Art Expression of Farmworkers Who Feed Us resulted from workshops the Geneseo Migrant Center held June through October in migrant labor camps that reached out to farmworker families. Collectively, the resulting 30-piece show illustrates a fraction of the trials and tribulations of farmworkers. Poems were written by Mexican and Puerto Rican participants in the literature program.

"This show brings a sense of humanity to this group of people (migrants) — many of whom find work on farms in this area," said Julia Stewart-Bittle, coordinator of the arts program at the Geneseo Migrant Center in Leicester.

The exhibit runs through Jan. 12, with an opening reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday at RoCo. At each venue there will be a short background lecture about the history of migrant farm work in the region, and the role of the migrant center, now in its 50th anniversary year. Stewart-Bittle will lead a walk through on how the pieces were made and share stories about several of the artists from 1 to 4 p.m. Dec. 15 at RoCo.

Robin L. Flanigan is a freelance writer in the Rochester area. This story includes reporting by Cynthia Benjamin, community content editor.