

Works of Lavonia Stockelbach

Art sale was an opportunity to own a piece of history

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The spirit of Lavonia Stockelbach is alive in the walls of Frunk & Gruven A-Z, where between antiques and old furniture are the dainty works of the famous Belleville artist.

Her paintings of the roughly 60 birds in Shakespeare's plays, painted on thin wooden trivets, are laid out on a table. Next to them are two bound editions of Stockelbach's accompanying book, *The Birds of Shakespeare*. The asking price: \$7,500.

By closing time at the special Sunday afternoon vernissage, the *Birds of Shakespeare* collection had not sold. But collector John Brisley of Demorestville wasn't really expecting it to sell anyway. It is the smaller single pieces, with an average price of about \$95, that he expected to be bigger sellers.

They were. Of the 40 original paintings of birds on sale, 38 of them sold, giving Belleville residents an accessible piece of Belleville's cultural history, said Mike Malachowski, owner of Funk & Gruven A-Z on Bridge Street East.

"It's been a tremendous success. I'm really pleased," he said. "As soon as I saw an example of her work, I was really excited about the opportunity to have this."

Stockelbach's paintings, done between 1928 and 1963, were purchased by Brisley at an auction liquidating the estate of her niece. About half of what he bought will remain in the Brisley estate, but he also wanted to share some of it.

"It's the uniqueness of it," said Brisley of Stockelbach's bird and botanical paintings. The fact that they are on American holly adds to the nature element of them, he said.

A lifelong birder, Brisley was intrigued by the paintings of ori-

oles, robins, blue jays and other North American birds. While birds were also Stockelbach's passion, her floral paintings are also well known. Ten emblems she painted flowers representing Canada's province are on display at the Canadian garden display of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Stockelbach was born Lavonia Ruth Hunter in 1874 in Belleville. She taught school in Plainfield before moving to Ottawa to work as a librarian. She married Dr. Fritz Stockelbach, a Danish chemist, and lived much of her life in the United States but travelled back to Belleville whenever possible. She died in 1966 at age 92 and is buried in Belleville.

The vernissage also included wine and cheese, and drew nearly 100 people, said Malachowski.

"This was an opportunity for Bellevillians to take a piece of history home with them," he said.