

Campbellville woman wins top art award

By Ann Hauprich-Nielsen
A Campbellville woman with a keen interest in the insect world, a vivid imagination and an arm full of talent came out tops in her division at a highly diversified showing of Sheridan College art work at the Toronto-Dominion complex last week.

Sjanie Bethlehem of Twiss Rd. received the award of excellence at "Springboard 77" in the Technical Illustration category for her collection of work which highlighted a giant waterbug about two feet in height.

Mrs. Bethlehem was also judged on her pen and ink rendering of a dragon fly, an interpretive drawing of an insect, an architectural rendering of an apartment building and research on Lamaist art in the form of six colorful illustrations suitable for the Royal Ontario Museum.

Those judging Mrs. Bethlehem's collection were graphic design artist Paul Arthur, photographer Ken Bell, illustrator Heather Cooper, Chatelaine fashion editor Evelyn Dollery, Financial Post art critic Arnold Edi borough, ceramicist Ruth McKinley, animator Elwy Yost and Globe and Mail art editor Jim Purdy.

Asked why she chose bugs as the subject of most of her award winning collection at "Springboard 77", Mrs. Bethlehem said she has long been fascinated by the insect world and is even considering going into the scientific illustration field when she graduates from Sheridan next month.

She said it took her about 200 hours to complete the giant waterbug because she had to make a prototype out of it in cardboard first.

Mrs. Bethlehem made the insect 13 times its original size using a dead waterbug she found near her home as a model.

"Everyone thinks insects are so ugly when they're small," Mrs. Bethlehem explained, "but when you blow them up, people can suddenly see their beauty."

She said she often photographs insects using a macro lens on her camera, then studies the colored slides and observes the insects in life before embarking on a major art project.

"I sort of scout around and read up in books and magazines that contain information on insects," she added.

The 35-year-old mother of three is in her third and final year of study at Sheridan College in Oakville.

Prior to starting the course in 1974, she only had her Grade 8 education and had no previous instruction in art.

Yet, at the end of her first year, Mrs. Bethlehem was chosen to receive the Academic and Proficiency Award for her division and last year received an honorable mention for her work at the Technical Communications Art Show.

Mrs. Bethlehem also achieved an A-plus status in English and photography during her years at the college.

She said she was accepted at Sheridan solely on the basis of the paintings and other art work — including authoring and illustrating three children's books — which she had done during her years as a housewife.

Mrs. Bethlehem said she hopes to do freelance work when she completes her course at Sheridan in May or may take work in a studio if she can commute.

"The thought of going out into the business world to sell my talents still scares me a bit," Mrs. Bethlehem confessed. "I've been painting and drawing for my own enjoyment for so long, it will be quite a change suddenly trying to market my work."



SJANIE BETHLEHEM of Campbellville, a third year Technical Illustration student at Oakville's Sheridan College, displays some of the drawings, paintings and other art projects she has completed in recent years. A separate collection of Mrs. Bethlehem's art work — including a giant waterbug — won her the award of excellence in her category at "Springboard 77" in Toronto last week. Her award winning collection will be on display at the Toronto-Dominion complex until April 15.

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