

The artists featured in the show at the Alexander/Heath Contemporary gallery in Roanoke have very personal, unconventional approaches to art.



Photos by HEATHER ROUSSEAU | The Roanoke Times

This standing sculpture by Dreama Kattenbraker is displayed in the "6 Women" exhibition at the Alexander/Heath Contemporary gallery in Roanoke.

'6 Women'

The idea for "6 Women," the exhibition opening Friday in the Alexander/Heath Contemporary gallery, came to curator Fleda Armistead Ring as spontaneous inspiration.

She typed out the names of five women, all established regional artists, in the Notes app in her phone. "When I looked at the names, I went, 'You know what's great about these people is they're very much their own work. They're not like anybody else. They're never going to be, no matter what they do, no matter what their influences are.' That's what I liked about them."

She also believed the distinct color palette each artist uses would play off one another well in a group show. "They fit for me," said Ring, who is also an established artist. Her own work has aspects that complement and contrast with the

other five.

About 18 months ago, the Roanoke Valley artists Ring picked — Elaine Fleck, Dreama Kattenbraker, Sarah EK Muse, Carol "CJ" Sparks Phillips and Ann Bondurant Trinkle — agreed to participate in the show.

All six artists have very personal, unconventional approaches to art. Fleck integrates vivid cutouts from cloth patterns into her oil paintings. Kattenbraker's lively sculptures evoke beings from fables and fairy tales. Muse creates jewelry and uses hammers to sculpt architectural copper tiles. Phillips makes quirky assemblages she calls "smalls," that call to mind the tiny, surreal creatures one might find in avant garde animation. Trinkle, too, uses found objects to make assemblages that she calls "physical poetry," and that remind me of some of Rene Magritte's surreal compositions.

Ring's large panels, which bear some resemblance to

colorful topographical maps, deserve up-close scrutiny, as literary and philosophical quotes appear within the networks of lines.

Ring, 49, intended to produce more art for the show, but health problems slowed her down, she said. She still managed to create two large, meticulous detailed abstract panels, and almost 100 sketch-pad drawings.

The artists had in mind showing in Alexander/Heath Contemporary from the beginning, Ring said, based on good experiences working with Ed Hettig, the gallery's co-founder and curator.

"I think we have a like-mindedness as far as what we want to show people," Hettig said. "I want to be able to show as many versions of contemporary art as I can. I'm always interested in stuff that typically you really don't see a lot of."

The artists and organizers hope to turn the show into a touring exhibition after it closes Nov. 29.



Fleda Armistead Ring stands in front of works from her "Textural Progressions" series. Ring is the curator for the "6 Women" show.

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"6 Women"

When: On display Friday through Nov. 29. Opening reception, 6-10 p.m. Friday

Where: Alexander/Heath Contemporary gallery, 425 Campbell Ave. S.W., Roanoke

Admission: Free
More information: (607) 226-2473; alexander-heath.com

Fleda Armistead Ring
Curator

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