

Gallery 1516 exhibit will showcase - Omaha World-Herald: Web Edition Articles (NE) - January 17, 2019

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WHEN MARY ZICAFOOSE attended "sixty-Five Plus"

at Gallery 1516 one year ago, she was impressed with the gallery's dedication to featuring work by Nebraska artists over the age of 65.

The show coincided with the national Women's March, though, and Zicafoose, an internationally known textile artist based in Omaha, was struck by the paucity of exhibitions showcasing female artists in the state.

she didn't hesitate to share her observation with gallery director Patrick Drickey.

"We just started talking, and I said, 'hey, wouldn't it be fun to have a show featuring Nebraska women artists?'" Zicafoose said.

The director loved the idea. "Mary came to me with the idea for a show, and we started making plans almost immediately," Drickey said.

The result is the "Nebraska 8 Invitational," an exhibition of over 50 artworks by Zicafoose, Christina Narwicz, Karen Kunc, Jacqueline Kluver, Gail Kendall, Sheila Hicks, Catherine Ferguson and Wanda Ewing. All are well-established artists who were selected for their distinctive expressions in painting, printmaking, textiles, fiber art, sculpture and ceramics.

art alone, however, wasn't the only selection criteria, Drickey said.

"These are women who over the years have done good deeds for the community," he said.

Ferguson, who has both large-scale sculptures and a wire wall hanging in the show, is a prime example. In addition to her large body of sculptures, installations and drawings, the Omaha artist designed the sets and costumes for Opera Omaha's 2008 production of "Aida," has public sculptures outside the W. Dale Clark main library and the CHI health Center, and has served on boards for the Bemis Center and the Nebraska Arts Council.

"I'm very honored to be included with the other artists," she said. "They're really outstanding. But the show is really about art and not gender. We're just women who happen to make great art, and as an artist, all you want is to be in a show with artists you respect."

That respect holds especially true for Ewing, who died in 2013. A professor at UNO, the African American artist created provocative art that challenged perceptions of black women and female beauty. Woodprints from her "Bougie" portrait series highlight how deftly she handled issues of

representation, race and gender.

she was chosen, Drickey said, for her outstanding lasting contribution to Nebraska's visual arts.

"Lots of women artists are no longer with us, but we decided to give it to Wanda," he said.

Zicafoose is thrilled for the public to see how her idea has come to fruition at the **gallery**.

"This is the first survey of Nebraska women artists, and it's so timely right now because there's such an awareness of the role of women as leaders. Women are stepping forward as never before, and the women in this show have given vitally to the state of Nebraska. These are all women who have been leaders in the state's arts."

For Drickey's part, the **gallery** director said he's never been so happy installing an exhibition before.

"Everywhere you look is a feast for the eyes," he said. "These artists are the cream of the crop in the state. I'd put this show anywhere in the country. They are as good as anywhere in the world — they're on an international level." **Gallery 1516, 1516** Leavenworth st. "Nebraska 8 Invitational." Opening reception: 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday. Through April 7. **Gallery** hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday to Sunday. gallery1516.org or 402-305-1510.

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