

## Beyond the best: 2010's top 10 list not big enough to hold art critic's favorites

Wednesday, January 05, 2011

By Mary Thomas, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Among the fanciful works of Maggie Taylor shown at the Silver Eye Center for Photography was "The Garden" from "Landscape of Dreams."

Top 10 lists are fun to compile and to debate, but they're never big enough to include all that makes a year special. My Top 10 ran Dec. 26, but here are some more things from the local visual arts scene that made 2010 noteworthy:

Among museum exhibitions that I couldn't squeeze onto my list were:

- **"Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend"** at The Andy Warhol Museum, for its wow factor (extended through Jan. 23).
- The mesmerizing **"Forum 65: Jones, Koester, Nashashibi/Skaer: Reanimation"** at Carnegie Museum of Art.
- "Associated Artists of Pittsburgh: Celebrating a Century of Art," a carefully compiled look at artists who exhibited in the first AAP Annuals for the organization's centennial year, at Westmoreland Museum of American Art.
- **"Rooted in Tradition: Art Quilts From the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum,"** a contemporary look, at Westmoreland Museum of American Art.

Solo artist shows have a hard time competing against larger museum exhibitions in year-end rankings, but many are excellent. Solo exhibitions offer artists opportunity to show their very best efforts through a significant body of work that gives a far better sense of thought and technique than one or two artworks in a group show can convey.

Standing out were:

- **Vanessa German** at The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust 709 Penn Gallery, Downtown;
- **David Lewis**, celebrating his 88th birthday, at Mendelson Gallery, Shadyside.
- **Thea Augustina Eck** at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

- A memorial retrospective of the photography of **Clyde Hare** at Concept Art Gallery, Regent Square;
- The dual solos of **Kathleen Mulcahy** and **Ron Desmett** at borelli-edwards galleries, Lawrenceville.
- **Joyce Werwie Perry** at Westmoreland Museum of American Art.
- **Fumino Hora** at the Pittsburgh Glass Center (through Jan. 17).
- **Rose Clancy's** "GardenLab @515" near the Mattress Factory.
- **Dr. James Nestor's** retirement retrospective at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Sometimes a single work made a group exhibition worth a visit. Two pieces that remain in my mind, both at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, are:

- **Wendy Osher's** "Continental Drift," included in "Interplay."
- **Bohyun Yoon's** "Structure of Shadow," part of the Center for Emerging Visual Artists, Philadelphia, exhibition "Context Ingeminate."

Smaller nonprofits were also sizzling in '10:

- Silver Eye Center for Photography showed the fanciful works of **Maggie Taylor**.
- Pittsburgh Center for the Arts presented thought-provoking "**Cluster**."
- The Society for Contemporary Craft gave us both seminal ceramist **Kurt Weiser** and food advocate/woodworker/smile-inducing **Craig Nutt**.
- The Miller Gallery of Carnegie Mellon University hosted the mind-expanding exhibition "**Experimental Geography**" and brought in to lecture artist/geographer/activist Trevor Paglen, who coined the term.
- The Nia Quilt Guild, North Side, sponsored an exhibition of new **Gee's Bend quilts** by the famed rural Alabama collective, at the New Hazlett Theater.
- And Fe Gallery, Lawrenceville, spilled over into The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust SPACE gallery, Downtown, and Artists Image Resource, North Side, for the inventive "**Rock, Paper, Scissors**."

Newsy bits

Following on the heels of the successful, and ongoing, Culture Clubs (which included a great "two-minute summer film festival" in the Sculpture Court), Carnegie Museum of Art presented three well-attended evenings that explored "What Are Museums For?" from the viewpoints of director Lynn Zelevansky, artist Duane Michals and the entire exhibitions staff.

Ceramic community doyenne Elvira Peake retired in December but will still keep a hand in her landmark gallery The Clay Place, a fixture in Shadyside for 33 years and for the past four in Carnegie, as director emeritus.

Pittsburgh continues to protect and draw attention to its art/cultural treasure, the murals of Maxo Vanka in St. Nicholas Croatian Church, Millvale. An exhibition, "Paintings and Works on Paper by Maxo Vanka," at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, showed more

of his art and introduced paintings by the late artist's great-granddaughter Marissa Halderman. Regularly scheduled tours are now offered at the church by The Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka ([www.vankamurals.org](http://www.vankamurals.org)).

Brother Nathan Cochran organized the third edition of the Nationwide Juried Catholic Arts Exhibition, which he founded, at Saint Vincent Gallery, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, and landed the indefatigable Sister Wendy Beckett as juror.

The Guild of American Papercutters National Museum was established in The Phillip Dressler Center for the Arts, Somerset, with a growing permanent collection and rotating exhibitions.

Looking forward

The year's major loss was the resignation of Tom Sokolowski as The Andy Warhol Museum director. We may take comfort in the appointment as acting director of Eric Shiner, the museum's Milton Fine curator of art, who has much on his plate but also the vision, intelligence and sensitivity to handle it.

Promising to be a big plus is the Pittsburgh Biennial, which launches June 10 at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, its founding organization, and then unfolds with three additional components at Carnegie Museum of Art, The Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University and The Andy Warhol Museum, the latter two in the fall.

On Feb. 5, the much anticipated "Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective" opens at Carnegie Museum of Art from the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The exhibition was co-curated by Carnegie director Lynn Zelevansky and Whitney curator Elisabeth Sussman.

Finally, "The Pittsburgh Gigapanorama I" was shot from the roof of the U.S. Steel Tower, Downtown, and exhibited there in the fall. Look for Gigapanorama II, which was participatory, to arrive at the Tower early this year.

The only thing needed to make our arts organizations and activities better in the upcoming year is your participation.

AAP @ Wilson Center

There will be a free public closing reception from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday for the "Associated Artists 100th Anniversary Celebration Exhibition" at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, 980 Liberty Ave., Downtown. Exhibiting artists are JoAnne Bates, Tina Williams Brewer, Vanessa German, Jeffrey Jones, Charlotte Ka, Thaddeus Mosley and Ruth Richardson ([www.AugustWilsonCenter.org](http://www.AugustWilsonCenter.org) or 412-258-2700).

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First published on January 5, 2011 at 12:00 am