

ART BEAT: Suwanee artist presents 'Facing Forward' at Gainesville's Quinlan Visual Arts Center

By Holley Calmes Staff Correspondent | Aug 13, 2021



Suwanee artist Gena Brodie Robbins has a 95-piece exhibition titled "Facing Forward" that opened Aug. 12 at Gainesville's Quinlan Visual Arts Center.

Photo: Brodiestudio.com

"This is the biggest show of my career," Suwanee artist Gena Brodie Robbins said of her 95-piece exhibition titled "Facing Forward" at Gainesville's Quinlan Visual Arts Center that opened Aug. 12 .

"There are numerous large pieces, 'things' hanging from the ceiling, immersive experiences, video, and 300 bright colored ping pong balls sporting quotes from famous and familiar women, with some other funky stuff thrown in," she said.

The exhibition will be on view through Oct. 2. Quinlan Visual Arts Center is located at 514 Greene Street, NE in Gainesville. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is free.

An "Artists' Talk" is scheduled for Sept. 12 at 11 a.m.

Much of Robbins' art reflects her battle with Myasthenia Gravis (MG,) a neuromuscular, anti-immune disorder causing extreme muscle weakness often reflected in her facial expressions. Her upbeat attitude and energy are

sometimes not reflected in her appearance.

Consequently, she uses this situation throughout her artwork, confronting the cultural expectations of women, persona, and how expressions are perceived in society.

“My art is a reflection of my MG,” she said. “I use snippets of what it is like to have this disease, working through issues such as acceptance and isolation.”

Robbins does this with humor as well as reflection. For example, she uses bright pink and orange color throughout the exhibition, particularly on 300 ping pong balls which sport quotes from famous women.

“I used some sports women, famous women such as Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Simone Biles, each with quotes about overcoming the expectations of being a woman,” Robbins said.

Another series includes 36 12 x 12 depictions of famous women with facial expressions that are less than inviting.

“These are women of royalty, politics and Hollywood, peering through a wall of spray paint dots. The dots symbolize the intrusive flashes of cameras and stage lights, plus the repeated colored dots found in digital screens and other printed material,” she said.

The Mansfield Gallery, the main gallery at Quinlan, is “an explosion of color,” Robbins said. Figurative, two-dimensional art is augmented with sculpture.

This gallery includes massive, 8 x 10 works. One figurative painting became the inspiration for more three-dimensional work.

Robbins said: “The more thickly I used the paint on the two-dimensional work, the more I started wanting to create three-dimensional sculptures.”

The last thing a visitor sees is a work called “Dissention.” Two heads sit on cylinders “about people height.” Although they seem to be facing one another, their glance is slightly off so that their eyes do not connect.

Robbins was born in Macon and received her bachelor’s of fine arts from Valdosta State University and her master’s of fine arts degree in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design. She hopes to travel “Facing Forward” to other museums and galleries across the country.