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Clayton Art Faire draws "great" entries

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CLAYTON -- "And The Blue Ribbon Goes To," was quite the coincidental title for the painting that won both the Judge's Choice Award and the People's Choice Award at the 13th annual Clayton Visual Arts Art Faire competition Thursday night.

Susan Brabeau's oil painting received its fair share of compliments from those in attendance, eliciting appreciation for its finely painted details and realistically humorous facial expressions of the four women who stood awaiting prizes for their homemade cakes at a county fair; one man told Brabeau he could smell his grandmother when he looked at the woman with the pearls and the fur coat.

Brabeau's painting hung on the wall of the Clayton Center with 53 other works of art. The previous year,

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Rebecca Putterman

Art enthusiasts examine Susan Brabeau's painting, which won the People's Choice Award as well as a Judge's Choice Award at the Clayton Visual Arts Art Faire competition.

only 38 pieces were entered into the competition.

"It was a really nice success. We had a lot of really great entries," said Clayton Visual Arts Secretary June Lioret, who estimated Thursday's event had the largest turnout ever with more than 125 people in attendance.

This was Wendell-based Brabeau's first entry into the Clayton Art Faire. An animal rescue worker, Brabeau has never had any formal training, but her father and grandfathers were both artists.

"I kind of just wanted to carry on the family thing, and I tried it out and I was successful from the very beginning," Brabeau said.

One of her friends, who was depicted as a 1950s housewife in the painting, accompanied Brabeau to the faire. Brabeau tends to dress up friends and family in old-fashioned clothing and photograph them, painting pictures derived from the photos.

Brabeau's focus on the old days comes from her inheritance of various antiques and pieces of clothing from her grandmother and great-grandmother.

"It's not just the look of the piece of furniture or whatever it is, it's the people that touched them and had them in their environment," Brabeau said.

"So that's kind of why I'm back living in those days. As much as I try to update my style, I keep going back to the same things, so I'm kind of giving into it."

Other winners included Anthony Ulinski, a Raleigh-based painter who won the \$750 Ritchie Award of Excellence, which honors the late Margaret Ritchie, a founder of Clayton Visual Arts and former editor of The Clayton News-Star.

Ulinski, who has a studio in downtown Raleigh and a gallery in Hillsborough, has entered the Clayton Art Faire for years.

Fay Terry of Pinehurst won one of the other Judge's Choice Awards for her painting, "Island Retreat," which features a house on Bald Head Island. The

judge, Tunde Afoloyan of Raleigh, said the painting made him feel like he was actually there.

Heidi Lee Peach of Clayton won another Judge's Choice Award for her photography, and Robin Wynn of Havelock won the second Ritchie Award of Excellence, also for photography.

Of the 53 entries, 28 were from Clayton artists who milled around the center admiring each other's work.

"You never would believe how very talented people are in Clayton," said Mardin Rhodes, who works at Clayton Community Library. "You would never connect the dots."

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