

The Art Center brings back big names for '50 Years of Art'

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By J.T. MORAND

Rarely seen contemporary art by well-known artists will be exhibited at The Art Center of Highland Park in celebration of the organization's 50th anniversary on May 6.

"50 Years of Art" will include works by Cat Chow, Roger Brown, Judith Geichman, Ed Paschke, Jozef Sumichrast and others. The exhibit will be on display and open to the public through May 24.



Ed Paschke's painting, "Nopal Naranja," on loan from the private Paschke Family Foundation collection, is part of The Art Center of Highland Park's 50th anniversary celebration.



"S Mermaid," one of five sculptures by artist Jozef Sumichrast, will adorn the front lawn of The Art Center in Highland Park as part of the "50 Years of Art" exhibit.



The Jozef Sumichrast sculpture, "Swimmer," is one of the 3-D pieces to be displayed on the lawn of The Art Center in Highland Park as part of the center's 50th anniversary celebration.

"The art is primarily from private collections," said Gabrielle Rousso, executive director of The Art Center. "So, it's art the public is unlikely to ever see."

The 20 pieces include paintings, sculpture and other three-dimensional pieces, with some being placed on the front lawn of The Art Center.

"It's quite a mixture of art mediums shown," Rousso said. "The artists have exhibited at The Art Center in past years and we feel they're all very important in the last 50 years in the art world."

She added, "It will be a feast for the eyes because there's so much to see."

But, there will be more than visual stimulation for those attending the anniversary party at 7 p.m. May 6.

Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist Laurence Hobgood, Hubbard Street 2 dance company and Larry Block, co-principal cellist for the Highland Park Strings, will perform that night. And, some artists are donating art to be auctioned off.

The Art Center started out in 1960 as the Suburban Fine Arts Center in a home before moving to a space on Central Street. It moved a few more times before ending up in the American Legion Hall in 2003.

Today, the Art Center serves more than 2,000 students of varying ages, from several communities, in more than 600 classes every year.

"Members and students come from not only Highland Park, but from 25 surrounding communities," Rousso said.

The Art Center hosts more than 20 contemporary art exhibits, offers 150 scholarships every year and leads several projects through its outreach program.

Jonathan Plotkin, vice president of The Art Center's board of directors and an artist, said the center plays a vital role in a community that appreciates the arts. Not only does Highland Park love the arts for aesthetic reasons, he said, but because "the arts are a major engine of economic growth."

For example, he said, when 250 people come to see an exhibit, they usually go out to eat and spend money around town. Participating in the arts, he added, provides space for people to think in a society that relies so much on technology.

"When the community is engaged in the arts, everybody is better off," he said. "We need to continue to remind people the arts are essential to the health of civilization."

Rousso said The Art Center plans to be around for another 50 years and is considering holding more community events in the building and hosting more performance classes.

"This is a very important part of many peoples lives," she said. "Highland Park is so supportive of the arts. It's why we've been able to be here for 50 years."

'50 Years of Art'

9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday; May 7-24, The Art Center, 1957 Sheridan Road, Highland Park. Anniversary Gala, 7 p.m., May 6, The Art Center. Tickets \$150-\$275. (847) 432-1888 or www.theartcenterhp.org