



Lori Felix

SURFACE TREATMENT

100 Women,100 words

Where: STC Library Art Galleries, Bldg. F, 3201 W Pecan Blvd

When: Through May 16, 2018

Hours: 7am-9:30pm Mon-Thurs, 8am-7pm Friday

Info: (956) 872-3488

Pubic Reception: 5-7pm, March 1, 2018

Notable Women

140 artworks with written expressions offer everyone a memorable experience.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

A unique exhibition of artworks recognizing local women who have assumed leadership roles is now on display at the STC Library Galleries. Organized by Patricia Ballinger, STC Assistant Art Professor, and Gina Otvos, Art Gallery Associate, "100 Women,100 Words" is a mixed-media exhibit comprised of works by South Texas women who have contributed or made an impact in the Rio Grande Valley. In conjunction with Women's History Month, it honors women from various backgrounds and professions in a most unusual format. The exhibit begins in the Downstairs Gallery and south hallway, ultimately moving upstairs with many more works displayed in the Library study area.

"100 Women,100 Words" continues the "100 Women" project initiated by Dr. Christina Wilson, Dean of the School of Arts and Letters at McMurry University in Abilene. Wilson was Interested in women's leadership qualities that ran deeper than a photograph and a bio, and her project took on a sociological/psychological aspect. Selected women were asked to write one hundred words about themselves and accompany the written

statement with an artwork. Wilson sees these images and words as artifacts of the women leaders in our state, revealing their thoughts through their art. "Although very few are actually trained in art," she explained, "we wanted to know who they are, what they thought about themselves, what was important to them, and what they did. Those are the things that we really set out to do." Art, along with writing, was considered an effective means of achieving this objective. "100 Women, 100 Words" continues the heart-felt view of values through the eyes of women who have achieved leadership roles. To permanently represent this aspect of Texas women's culture for posterity, future plans include documentation in the form of an historical catalog. "100 Women" ultimately grew to recognize 140 women for the RGV exhibit, with 270 women currently representing the state total.

The art works and the words are equally fascinating. This is not your typical portraiture experience where the art reflects the subject's face. Participants used a 6"x 6" canvas to create a painting, collage materials from their own work, paste photographs or fabric, or do anything that represented something meaningful about themselves or reflected their interest. The canvas was intended to visually tell their stories, personal or professional, and communicate whatever was considered important to their identity; the 100 words expressed a deeper perception. As a result, there is a wide variety of information. Good stuff. Artworks range from the artistically informed to photo album style, while the writing includes poems, thoughts, and histories. These artifacts are direct and to the point, reflecting an unpretentious honesty and a passionate awareness. Intense in their devotions and vocations, one might notice that compassion and personal strength is a recurring theme. Some women tell of disappointment and struggle in their work, but an unflagging persistence is felt. Some have faced and overcome obstacles. Others have successfully navigated a shift in life's direction. Many of the writings are powerful and evoke a thoughtful pause before continuing on to the next work. The project is a textbook of guideposts illuminating the human spirit. And it also makes for very good art.

Although focused on the feminine sex, everyone should be able to relate to this exhibition, and perhaps learn something. Attend the official Reception at STC on March 1 or just plan a leisurely visit; there's plenty of time.

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com