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Of Substance: A Juried Sculpture Exhibition," the latest in a run of shows of extraordinary quality at Harmony Hall Regional Center, is even more remarkable because it is limited to work by artists who live, work or study in the county.

Juror Valerie Fletcher, curator of sculpture at the Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, chose 15 works by eight county artists in media, from wood to wire.

There's not much conventional chipping away of stone here: one piece, Sun Jung Park's "Collection of Soul," is made of translucent plastic blood bags inflated with "breath." The artist's? There's no way of knowing.

Park's other piece is just as unique and unsettling. It's a woolly, furry, slumping shape of woven fibers, part very old sofa cushion and part very old house pet, topped with a neat bow.

Phyllis Evans presents her small sculptural pieces in series on the walls, where they look like items laid out after an archaeological dig. Shapes reminiscent of bone fragments, pottery shards and broken bits of implements, made in papier-mache and other media, have an otherworldly presence.

More conventional are Phil Brown's turned-wood bowls, with the rich woods honed to an impossible delicacy. Tamara Thomas' "Praise the Lord," an assemblage of flea-market finds in the shape of a woman rising from her chair to do just that, is a piece that could put the artist on the track to the Renwick Gallery or the American Visionary Art museum. Melissa Burley's "Fire Song" is visionary and organic, combining raku and wood in fluted coral forms.

Forrest Tyler displays two curvaceous hunks of wood, hewed and sanded to bring out all the ripples and waves in the grain, and Jeff Colburn contributes two witty and slick assemblages. Jacalyn Watson Thomas shows three luminous creations of knit wire.

More traditional, representational views abound at the 59-piece juried show of the Patuxent Art League at Montpelier Cultural Arts Center. Technical virtuosity is rewarded here; the still lifes are especially fine and make up the majority of the award-winners.

Taking first place is Natalie Fleming's "Croton in Bloom," a tropical plant watercolor study, its huge leaves bursting out of a tight composition. Second place goes to an oil landscape, Anna Morrison's "Patapsco Valley Overlook." Third is another still life, "Fire/Dancers" by Mona Kauppinen, a glowing pastel of red pears on an elaborately draped table.

Among the still-life merit award-winners are "Tools of My Trade" by Eleanor Hajduk, an oil of a paint kit watched over by a memento mori; "Pears" by Nikki Rutz, a branch dripping with dewy fruit; and "Peaches" by Gail Nickells, which includes a meticulously detailed rendering of a lace tablecloth.

Almost a dozen more great still lifes didn't win awards. If you're looking for good decorative pieces for a home or interested in finding a good portraitist, this show is a good place to visit.

A couple of pieces aren't so easily categorized, however, and give the show flavor.

Julie Suzanne turns in "Single Edged Insanity," a quiet, representational still life featuring an arrangement of an apple and razor blades. Steve Buzash's "Seated Couple," a swirling, surreal portrait in bile colors, is as spooky as the best outsider art.

And Barbara Melcher's photograph, "Ocean City," is a witty comment on art shows in general. It's a view of the infamous Ocean Gallery at the shore, with its huckstering jumble of signs and mass-produced paintings.

In the Resident Artists' Gallery, "New Paintings and Etchings by David C. Brosch" complements the rest of Montpelier's representational art. His large linotypes and etchings of fruits and flowers are delightful.

If you look at exhibits and feel that you could do as well, Montpelier offers an opportunity to find out. Its "All Hung" exhibit runs Jan. 5 through 17. Drop off your art between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Jan. 4--it's first-come, first-hung until they run out of room.

Artists can submit only one piece of work--framed, matted and wired, with hooks suitable for hanging--and it can't be larger than 35 inches in any direction. There's no hanging fee or commission on sale of the work. For information, call 301-953-1993.

"Of Substance: A Juried Sculpture Exhibition" runs through Dec. 29 at Harmony Hall Regional Center, 10701 Livingston Rd., Fort Washington. 301-203-6070. "Patuxent Art League Juried Show" and "New Paintings and Etchings by David C. Brosch" run through Dec. 29 at Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, 12826 Laurel Bowie Rd., Laurel. 301-490-2329