

Birds are subject of Haymarket art

By Jim Williams

The painter or sculptor whose subject is wildlife works in the no-man's land between art and craftsmanship.

Wildlife enthusiasts often believe that animals and birds themselves are beautiful enough to require no artistic embellishment. To them, the wildlife artist's job is to portray his subjects accurately and naturally, in an appropriate and attractive attitude and setting.

art review

This view can be criticized for limiting the artist's scope and making it unlikely that wildlife art will ever advance beyond the standards set by Audubon.

On the other hand, it also may restrain wildlife artists from producing the more of the awful gack that clutters up "progressive" galleries these days.

Jim McClelland and Paul Johnsgard are straightforward portrayers of birds - McClelland in watercolor and Johnsgard in wood and ink. Their exhibit at the Haymarket Gal-

lery through April will appeal to bird lovers and enthusiasts of detail and craftsmanship. It's not intended as an insult to say that those seeking avant-garde creativity had better go to another gallery.

Johnsgard is a UNL professor, and birds are his specialty. So it's no surprise that his woodcarvings are life-size and painstakingly rendered, right down to the feathers.

Owls, eagles, falcons and loons perch here and there in the gallery's front room. My favorites were two little "Screech Owls" and "Loon with Chick" - no particular reason why, I just liked them.

Johnsgard also shows some ink drawings for his book on ducks, geese and swans. His draftmanship is precise, but he's not as good on paper as he is with wood.

McClelland is, though. His bird portraits show perfect control of tone and depth - the tiny spot of luminous purple in a mallard's wing or the glint in a sparrow's eye glow with sharper-than-life brilliance.

McClelland also shows some other paintings, mostly scenics with birds flying by. However, these don't highlight his strong points - detail and control - as well as the close-ups.

All I'll say about prices is that they're somewhere over the rainbow. But you may want to take a free look at the Haymarket if you're always complaining about "all that modern abstract art" - or even if you're not.

Legislature tunes out public radio bill

Nebraska public radio was tuned out on the floor of the Nebraska Legislature Wednesday. LB601, a bill to create a state-sponsored radio network, failed to get the 25 votes necessary to advance it.

Static from commercial radio stations contributed heavily to the bill's demise. Even after the bill was amended to remove provisions to finance the network, the bill failed.

According to Sen. Steve Fowler of Lincoln, one of the bill's sponsors, the commercial radio stations lobbied heavily against the bill. They were the only opposition, he said.

Sen. Shirley Marsh of Lincoln, another of the bill's sponsors, told her colleagues that the radio network was

needed for the handicapped, particularly the blind, who could get news and entertainment not available on commercial stations from the network.

The bill's opponents argued that the state could not afford the network and objected to the state competing with commercial broadcasters.

Sen. Elroy Hefner of Coleridge said "private radio stations are doing a terrific job."

Sen. Richard Lewis of Holbrook said, "any time that a tax-paying institution is placed in competition with a tax-using institution I give my support to the tax-paying institution."

Marsh responded that public radio airs different programs and would not compete with commercial radio.

Amendments proposed by Sen. Donald Dworak of Columbus would have delayed the construction of the network for at least a year. During that year a study conducted by the Nebraska Educational Television Network Commission and the public radio stations in Omaha would study the idea.

Marsh said she will not try to bring the bill back this session.

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