

## The 'Bravest' Are Artistic, Too

Fighting fires has been called one of the toughest jobs in the city, and after a long day of preparing for alarms, wrestling fire hoses and facing smoke, flame and falling debris, you wouldn't think a firefighter would have any energy left to put into creative pursuits.

But you'd be wrong.

Thirty-five of the Fire Department's best artists proved that beyond doubt at an exhibit given by the New York City Firefighters Fine Arts Society, which opened on Oct. 4 in the lobby of 2 World Trade Center. These were no Sunday painters, but artists of clearly professional caliber, as just about everybody who stopped by the exhibit seemed to agree.

The variety of the concepts and artistic modes was as striking as their quality, ranging from the stained glass designs of Harry T. Gillen to the wood inlays of Benjamin Decarlo to the cartoons of Paul Hashagen. Some, like oil painter John Goss and photographer Al Trojanowicz, concentrated on themes related to their experience as firefighters; others, like surrealist painter Arthur Poore, soared as far away from the workaday world as they could get.

The talented Poore family contributed two brothers to the show: Arthur, who paints surrealist landscapes and does abstract wood carvings, and Russ, whose oil paintings, while more conventional in style, depict the flying tortoises and three-headed dragons of purest fantasy.

Arthur Poore, who has been painting for 18 of his 29 years, said he and his brothers and sisters were encouraged

by their parents to take up a number of artistic pursuits. "We were a big family, and very artistic," he recalled. Nor did they concentrate on the visual arts; Arthur Poore also plays "eight to 10 instruments."

Their father's influence affected the brothers Poore in another equally important way; he was a city firefighter himself for a number of years.

### Share Mutual Interest

While the artists were clearly pleased to see their work appreciated, artistic and commercial success is not what drives them to create or to join the society. Henry Gillen, who has made some stained-glass signs for businesses in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, said that when he works for money, "I don't enjoy it as much."

Instead, these firefighters seem most to enjoy sharing a mutual interest, and see the Society as an extension of the comradery they enjoy on the job. As cartoonist Paul Hashagen put it, "They push you to see what you can do. If you move, they come and help you move. If you build something, they come and help you build."

The 35 artists whose works were on display are all members of the Fine Arts Society, which was founded earlier this year to help give expression to the creative impulses of firefighters and now has a total of 40 members who are active or retired firefighters. Those involved with the show gave much of the credit for its success to Fine Arts Society President James Brennan. It was Mr. Brennan who first

thought of the exhibit, according to Lieut. Raymond Bisch, who works with him at Engine Co. 96.

Although Mr. Brennan could not be at the opening due to a death in the family, those who were there, such as Society Vice President George Hacker, praised the "months and months of hard work" he put in organizing the exhibit, convincing the Port Authority to allow it to be held in the World Trade Center, and getting things ready in time for the event to be part of the National Fire Prevention Week observances being held Oct. 4 through Oct. 15.

The other firefighters whose works were on exhibit are: Matt Baimonte, William Brennan, John Calderone, John J. Congello, Joe Connelly, Michael Donohue, Franz A. Edwards, Ralph Feldman, Warren Fuchs, Larry Gray, Joe Gruosso, Peter Hassler; and Larry Gray, Joe Gruosso, George Hacker, Paul Hashagen, Peter Hassler; and

Richard A. Heyer, Bernard Hickey, William Kieswer, Charles Lustenring, Felix Massica, Lawrence McGevna, Alfred Morris Jr., Robert Morrison, Al F. Pharney, Citeno Rocco, Edward T. Shields, Danny Sullivan, Frank M. Vessio, Harold G. Wilkins and George Williams.

The New York City Firefighters Fine Arts Society exhibit will remain in the lobby of 2 World Trade Center through Oct. 15, and can be seen from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. After Oct. 15, there are plans to move the exhibit to Rockefeller Center and other locations around the city.

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