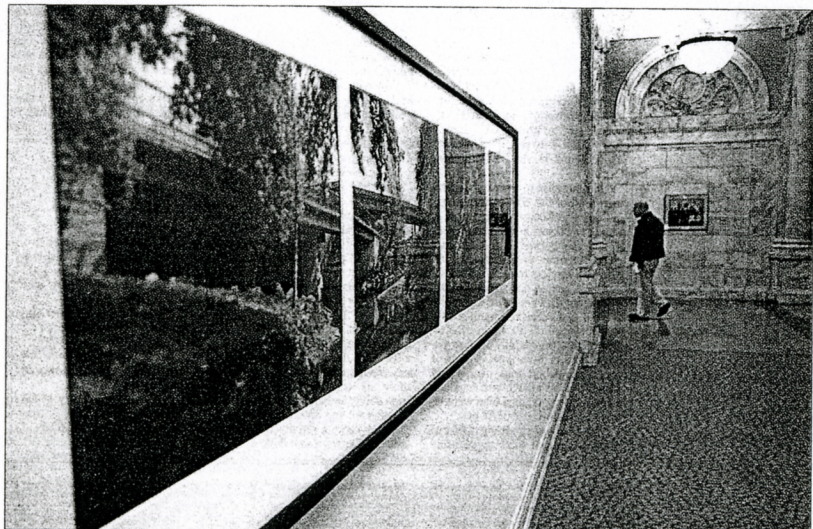


District

EXTRA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2006



BY MICHAEL ROBINSON CHAVEZ — THE WASHINGTON POST

The 175 art pieces by area artists are on permanent exhibit at the John A. Wilson Building, which houses the offices of the mayor and D.C. Council.

D.C. Adds Local Art to Downtown Palette

City Hall Exhibit Balances Offerings of Nearby National Museums, Galleries

By PAUL SCHWARTZMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

The hallways inside the District's city hall are dominated by a rolling parade of politicians, lobbyists and bureaucrats.

Now there's a new addition brightening the otherwise bland vista: artwork.

Not just 1, 2 or even 10 pieces, but 175 — all of them produced by Washington area artists and now on permanent display at the John A. Wilson Building.

From abstract paintings to photography to sculpture, the wide-ranging exhibition is spread over six floors and is the first of its kind at the building, which houses the offices of the mayor and D.C. Council.

"It brings life to the halls," Anthony Gittens, director for the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, said as he toured the exhibit on a recent afternoon.

The commission came up with the idea for the exhibit as a way to draw attention to the work of D.C. area artists and chose the Wilson Building.

See ARTWORK, Page 11

Local Works Broaden Downtown Art Scene

ARTWORK, From Page 1

building as a centrally located showcase. Sondra N. Arkin, the exhibit's curator, said no particular theme permeates the exhibit, which features several prominent artists, including painters Sam Gilliam and Robin Rose and photographer William Christenberry.

A panel reviewed some 4,000 submissions before selecting the exhibit. The main criteria was that artists be from the area. The commission spent \$400,000 acquiring the art. The most it paid was \$17,000 for a Gilliam painting.

Washington's local art scene, Arkin said, typically is "overpowered" by the national museums and galleries downtown.

"People come to Washington, and they go to the Mall," she said. But with the city hall exhibit, she said, visitors can "see the breadth of Washington art."

"They get to see that there's abstraction and clay work and glasswork that's as good as anywhere in the country," she said. "Often when people travel, they want to see who's doing the local art, and in Washington there often hasn't been a place like that."

Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) attended a reception Oct. 31 celebrating the exhibit's opening. What he and hundreds of guests saw was a eclectic mix of art, to say the least. There is a 45-year-old abstract watercolor by a now 89-year-old painter. There is a painting of a woman with floating hair, surrounded by floating keyholes.

Although the exhibit is not focused on images of the District, the city and its residents make regular appearances, such as in the panoramic photograph of a father and daughter fishing on the C & O Canal.

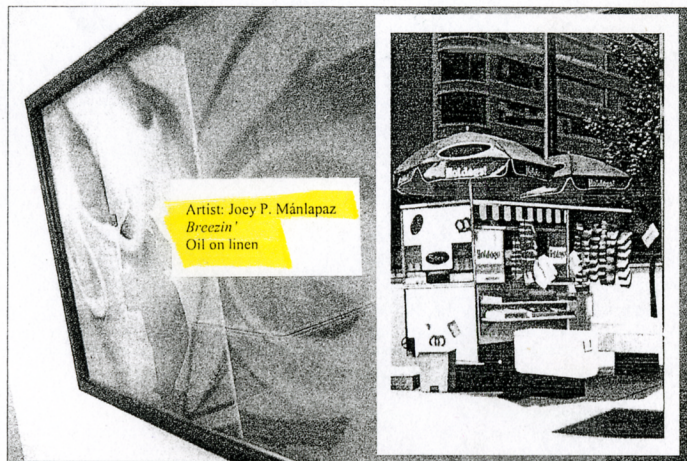
Another photograph is of superimposed images of 14th Street. A garage with a pink roof in a Washington back alley is captured in a painting. Another portrays a downtown hotdog stand. A third depicts the neon lights of the Iwona Theater sign.

Phyllis Furdell, a Falls Church painter who has spent 20 years capturing life on Metro trains on canvas, sold the commission her rendition of a moment on the Red Line that she painted in 1992.

Furdell has completed more than two dozen paintings of Metro scenes over the years, finding endless inspiration in the cross-section of humanity underground.

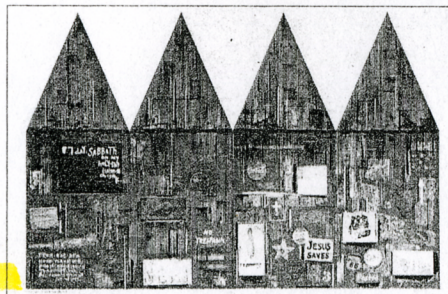
"It's one of those places where you get this mixture of people from all walks of life, where they're either going to work or they're homeless or they're tourists," she said. "It just seems that they're very lost in their own worlds, and yet they're all together. They're absorbed in their own destinations and destinations."

Furdell, a project manager for the National League of Cities, sold the painting for



BY MICHAEL ROBINSON CHAVEZ — THE WASHINGTON POST

Exhibit visitors are reflected in one work. The city wanted to highlight local works in a downtown that's dominated by national and international art.



D.C. COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Photographer William Christenberry's 57-color silkscreen, "Dream Building (Blue)."

\$1,440. She said she's pleased by the prospect of visitors being able to view her work for years to come.

"Most artists like to think their work will be in a permanent place," she said. "It's a good opportunity for immortality."

Brendan Hoffman, a freelance photojournalist, had his camera when he swung by the Maine Avenue fish market one afternoon last February. He snapped shots of two men working behind a counter, beneath a sign reading, "Our Crabs Have No Sand."

Eight months later, the photos are hanging at city hall.

Hoffman was drawn to the market, he said, "because it seems like a remnant from youth."

er time. It's so far removed from our common supermarket experience, it's different and unique."

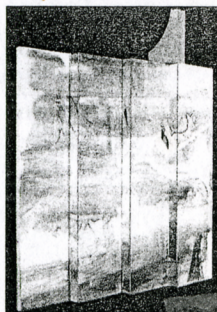
He said that he got about \$200 for his photographs and that the money wasn't the point.

"It's a nice thing to be part of, it's good for the résumé, and I'm pleased to see the government taking an active role to encourage the arts," he said. The arts are "an easy thing to get rid of."

The artwork is on display in the John A. Wilson Building's public areas from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays. A photo ID is required to enter the building.



Phyllis Furdell's pastel on sandpaper, "Red Line Scene." Furdell, of Falls Church, has spent 20 years capturing Metro train scenes on canvas.



The city paid \$17,000 for painter Sam Gilliam's