

KITCHENER - WATERLOO
ART GALLERY

101 Queen Street North
Kitchener, ON
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www.kwag.on.ca

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Joan Bielun (Penticton, BC). *Resident Relic*.
2007, fabric. Image courtesy of the artist.
Photo: K.J. Bedford, KW|AG.

The Grand National Viewer's Choice Award Recipient Announced

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada- The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KW|AG) and Joseph Schneider Haus Museum (JSH) are pleased to announce the recipient of the **Viewer's Choice** award for this year's *The Grand National* quilt show, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Each year, *The Grand National* quilt committee invites visitors to the exhibition to vote for their favourite quilt through secret ballot. The quilt with the most votes is nominated the "Viewer's Choice."

This year's Viewer's Choice award recipient is **Joan Bielun** from Penticton, British Columbia, for her work *Resident Relic*. Bielun receives an Elna Pro Quilting Queen sewing machine sponsored by Elna, Canada. Bielun is also the recipient of this year's **Janome Award of Excellence**.

Bielun was inspired to create *Resident Relic* after she and her husband visited the Galápagos Islands of Ecuador in 2006. Relating to the passage of time inherent in this year's exhibition theme, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, she recalled how her visit was "an experience in time travel... primordial landscapes... primitive tree cacti growing in volcanic slag... and giant land tortoises emerging from metre high grasses." Working from a photo she had taken on her trip, she attempted to re-create the isolated landscape and the persona of an aged *Resident Relic*, a giant tortoise, who is the symbol for the Islands and "a reminder and hope for future generations to cherish."

"I really wanted to commemorate our trip to this special place that personified 'Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow' to me," explains Bielun. "The Islands are so serene and remote -- what the earth was like long ago when there was no pollution, and when it was uninhabited by humans. We went up to the Highlands and watched the tortoises who looked like huge rocks on the road. We stood within inches of them. *Resident Relic* is about appreciating nature and wildlife, especially in areas that are threatened like the Galápagos."

According to Bielun, the Galápagos are on the UNESCO World Heritage "in Danger" list. Situated in the Pacific Ocean, these nineteen islands are approximately 1 000 km from South America. The marine reserve is considered a living museum, a showcase of evolution, and a melting pot of marine species because of its unique location at the confluence of three ocean currents. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1>)

Susan Burke, curator of *The Grand National*, explains that some of the artists, such as Bielun, "used animal species to convey their musings on 'time in its flight'... and generally found these symbols in nature to be hopeful and life-affirming for mankind, while others detected environmental warnings for the world of tomorrow. Bielun's quilt makes us question whether the lumbering land tortoises of the Galápagos will be able to adapt and survive."

Interestingly, the giant tortoise has been able to adapt over the centuries,

Gallery Hours:

Mon - Wed 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Thurs 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Fri - Sat 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sun 1 - 5 p.m.

and prior to all The Centre In The Square performances

Open Civic Holiday, Mon Aug 4 10-5

Open Labour Day, Mon Sept 1 10-5



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but Bielun wonders whether this will continue in the future or if the species will be forced into extinction due to increased human immigration and tourism to the Galápagos Islands. *Resident Relic* is a powerful reminder that such species need to be protected, studied and cherished for future generations to come.

The Grand National exhibition catalogue is available for free download on the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery web site at www.kwag.on.ca/current_exhibitions/view/?display=more&item_id=67. To learn more about *The Grand National's* award winners, read our companion media release.

About the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

Through thoughtful and engaging programs, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KW|AG) connects people and ideas through art. The Gallery's exhibits and programs are built on the mission that art is the catalyst for shared experience, dialogue and imagination. The Gallery emphasizes contemporary art, often premiering works by Canadian and international artists. Exhibitions frequently draw upon selections from the 4 000 work permanent collection to provide a forum for dialogue. KW|AG plays a vital educational role in the community, offering a full spectrum of artistic experience for adults, children and families alike. Established in 1956 and operating within Centre In The Square, KW|AG is the oldest and largest public gallery in Waterloo region: roots in the community, eyes on the world. For more information, contact mail@kwag.on.ca or visit www.kwag.on.ca.

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