

Fundraiser aids d'Art Center artists after explosion

By Lauren King
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NORFOLK

A glass pendant didn't appear to have a scratch on it.

There was some dust and drywall on a nearby painting, but a light brushing could be enough to clean it up.

Janice Gay Maker's painting, however, definitely looked like it had survived an explosion.

Protruding through the impressionist landscape were chunks of safety glass from Selden Arcade. The painting was on an easel April 17 when the fragments flew into the back of the canvas.

These and other "survivors" were on display Sunday afternoon at a fundraiser for d'Art Center artists at Smartmouth Brewing Co. in Norfolk.

Artists who worked at the center in Selden Arcade lost supplies and artwork in the explosion. Retail sales also are shut down with the center.

To help make up for the deficit, many of the artists are working in makeshift studios to prepare for the upcoming Stockley Gardens and Gosport arts festivals, said Amy McKay, a d'Art Center spokeswoman. Money raised Sunday was to go to the artists, and there is a link on the center's website to donate.

McKay said they have been told it will be several months before the artists' studios and shops can return.

In the explosion, an interior wall collapsed and the building suffered "heavy damage," according to Norfolk Fire-Rescue Battalion Chief Julian Williamson.

Mixed-media artist Deborah Small described a shower of glass that spewed down the corridor. There was no fire, but she and Mark McFarlane, a goldsmith, said there was smoke from burning electric, so they went outside to wait for firefighters.

Later, Fire-Rescue crews salvaged what art they could. The day after the explosion, some tenants were able to go inside and check the galleries close to the Main Street entrance. The galleries close to Plume Street were still off limits.

At the time, there was a wearable art display. That show was moved to the Slover Library next door.

Several of those items were on display Sunday outside Smartmouth, along with paintings and jewelry.

Fundraising for the artists will continue, but this week, McKay said, some of the focus will shift to finding new locations for the d'Art Center's summer programs. A list of events, on display at Smartmouth, will also need to be moved or rescheduled. The d'Art Center leases a large part of the arcade from the city.

McKay said their email accounts are inaccessible, so anyone who has suggestions for other locations for their events should contact the city of Norfolk.

On Friday, Starbucks and d'Egg Diner were able to reopen at Selden Arcade with generator power.

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