

The Virginian-Pilot

PilotOnline.com

Norfolk's d'Art Center is alive with "creatures"

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The Virginian-Pilot

Jan 9, 2018 Updated Jan 10, 2018



Helen Jones, photographer, d'Art Center
A "creature" piece in the "It's Alive" exhibit at d'Art Center.

Since moving to the NEON district in 2016, the d'Art Center has continued its tradition of communal and collaborative art, despite its previous spell of temporary homelessness.

"It's Alive," a new exhibition at d'Art that opened on Jan. 4 and closes Feb. 1, celebrates the spirit of collaboration, long a hallmark of the art center when it was located in the Selden Arcade in downtown Norfolk. But an electrical explosion there in April 2015 displaced d'Art.

Its current location at 740 Duke St., across the street from the Chrysler Museum and its Glass Studio, may not be as open and accessible to the public as the Selden was, but that apparently hasn't hindered the creativity among the d'Art artists.

"It's Alive" features original pieces, all collaborations between d'Art affiliated artists. Each work, or "creature," is a three-dimensional mixed media piece that explores the creative process.

“All of the works in this exhibition were worked on by nine or more different artists over a 10-month period,” says Amanda Bradley, d’Art’s communication manager and special events coordinator. “The artists who participated come from many different facets of art mediums, including mixed media fiber arts, oil painting, photography, metal smithing and printmaking. The many different styles of art making is what has made each of these creatures so unique.”

Each creation was also passed around with a journal in which the artists explained their creative process or continued the creature’s story line. The exhibition also features creature collaborations from the art and leadership week of d’Art summer camp, budding artists between ages 10 and 13, and other d’Art-affiliated creature collaborations from years past.

D’Art’s new home has provided a different type of creative energy that’s reflected in “It’s Alive,” Bradley says.

“Since moving to the NEON district, the d’Art center has experienced a great sense of camaraderie from the surrounding artistic community and businesses. The district really does help to promote and support each other.”

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