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Megan Berner examines the Best in Show and People's Choice Award winner for the City of Reno Employee Art Show, a cross-stitching called "Dispatch Angel" by Denise Farson.

PHOTO/MATT BIEKER

Government work

City of Reno Employee Art Show

The city of Reno has a reputation as an artistic town, but a gallery exhibit in City Hall showcases the artwork of the City of Reno with a capital "C." More specifically, it's a collection of works made by city government employees.

"We decided we wanted to do this on our own because we thought we have a lot of employees here, and it would be a cool way to engage people here and show off talents—something that not everybody gets to do in their normal work day," said Megan Berner, public art program coordinator for the City of Reno.

Berner, who wrote for the RN&R in the past, now works with the Arts, Culture and Events division of the City Manager's office to oversee public galleries in both the McKinley Arts Center and the Metro Gallery on the first floor of City Hall, where the Employee Arts Show will hang until Dec. 27.

"We started letting employees know in the summer that we were going to be doing this at the end of the year," Berner said. "We still didn't really have an idea of how much work we would actually get for this."

Nearly 40 employees ended up submitting art work including photography, painting, colored pencil and textile arts, among others.

"It was shocking to see," said Berner. "We have a ton of creative people here who are talented, and it's cool to see that. I think a lot of the employees actually enjoyed learning that about their coworkers."

The show also has a contest element, Berner said, and is based on the National Arts Program, which sponsors similar

shows around the country. Artists entered their pieces in youth, amateur or professional categories, and winners were selected by a jury of local artists.

However, because City Hall doesn't meet the number of employees required by the National Arts Program, Berner and her coworkers funded some of the costs with the City's galleries budget. And while the National Arts Program offers cash prizes, the City of Reno Employee Art Show winners found support from the local private sector.

"We actually got donations from a ton of businesses around town, and it was awesome—they were super generous," Berner said. "Nevada Fine Arts gave prizes for all the youth categories ... for the more adult categories we had, like, a gift card to Hub [Coffee Roasters]. We got coffee from Forged Coffee and a gift card from them. And Pitch Black Printing Co. gave us printing, you know, so somebody can go get prints of their art made."

The awards were given out on Dec. 5 in a reception at City Hall, and the piece's still hang with their winner's ribbons—including Berner's, which won second place in the Professional category. Berner was the Friends of Black Rock High Rock Artist-in-Residence in 2017, where she spent two weeks living in the Black Rock Desert for inspiration on a new project—cyanotypes of local plant life.

"They're UV light sensitive," Berner said. "So you take paper and coat it with these chemicals, and ... you set an object on top of it and it basically creates a silhouette. ... 'Sage Brush Cyanotypology' is what I call them."

The show will be up for a few more weeks, but the City plans to make it an annual event.

"It's incredible the support that we got for this," Berner said. □

The City of Reno Employee Art Show will hang in the Metro Gallery at City Hall, 1 E. First St., until Dec. 27.