

WATERCOLORS

## Utah County Art Gallery exhibit features senior works



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Color your world with a collection of watercolor paintings displayed at the Utah County Art Gallery in the Health and Justice Building in Provo.

The exhibit features paintings by a group of senior citizens at the Orem Senior Friendship Center, and will hang at the Health and Justice Building through the month of January.

Carol Wight, publicity chairman for The Utah County Art Board, which sponsors the show, said the success of last year's exhibition prompted a return of the artists' work.

"We exhibited last year and were successful, so we decided to do it again this year," she said.

This year's exhibit includes the work of 13 artists, including Wight, who attend a

watercolor class sponsored by ElderQuest, a Utah Valley University program, at the Orem Senior Friendship Center.

"All of these people are at least 65, and many are older," said Wight. "People get the idea that old people can't do anything, that they're senile and have Alzheimer's. These people are awfully good artists. Some are beginners, like me, but there are a lot of old-timers that have been there for years. They're really dedicated and it's really excellent art. "

The exhibition includes depictions of landscapes, animals and portraits. Artist Gail Wilhelmsen, a Lindon resident who's attended the watercolor class for the last two years, has eight paintings -- three landscapes and five portraits -- hung in the gallery.

"I like the challenge of doing portraits," said Wilhelmsen. "It's almost a spiritual experience as you search for something unique about that person's personality. If I wanted it to look exactly like a person, I'd get my camera out and take a picture. It's a lot faster and more accurate. But I'm looking for something much deeper within the person. All of my portraits have significance to them ... something that has meaning to me."

Wilhelmsen, who has painted for over 45 years, only recently tried her hand at portraits -- the reason being she had an identical twin sister with a master's of fine art who was an excellent portrait painter.

"I didn't have the training she had, so there was no way I was going to compete with her," she said. "She passed away a few years ago, and so that kind of allowed me to try portraits. Maybe it's genetic that I was as good at portraits as she was, without nearly as much training."

Wilhelmsen said the class at the senior center, taught by Barbra Wardle and Sharon Cannon, and the opportunity to exhibit together is both a support and motivation for seniors to continue developing their talent.

"I think we all feel one another's support," Wilhelmsen said. "You get there and have time to create and be with each other. It's really motivational and helpful knowing that next week I'll be going to the class and will be able to bring something and have others make comments about it. It's been very helpful for me in staying with the painting process."

## **If you go**

### **Senior Friendship Center Watercolor Exhibit**

**Where:** Utah County Art Gallery, Health and Justice Building, 151 S. University Ave., Provo

**When:** Through Jan. 31; gallery open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Admission:** Free