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Story Quilts and Poetry at PHES Gallery

BETH SMITH | EVENTS

The PHES Gallery in Carlsbad, California, received a *Fiber Art Now* Gathering Grant in support of their exhibition and poetry reading event for *Story Quilts and Poetry*, May 21 through July 8, 2023. PHES Gallery is owned by artists and educators Paul Henry and Ellen Speert.

Speert curated the exhibition and selected contemporary quilted artworks from 11 artists in the region. In addition to the exhibition, a call went out to local poets for an ekphrastic poetry contest. Ekphrastic poetry is inspired in response to a form of art. Poets were invited to read their poems at a poetry reading and exhibit viewing event on June 25.



Poetry reading at PHES Gallery, June 25, 2023. Poets submitted their poems for an ekphrastic poetry contest inspired by the artwork in the Story Quilts exhibition.

Exhibiting artists were Sandra Lauterbach, Nancy Lemke, Viviana Lombrozo, Nelda McComb, Dan Olfe, Marty Ornish, Karen Rips, Tara Ritacco, Dinah Sargeant, Deborah Weir, and Susan Willen.

Three poets received cash prizes for their poems judged by juror Marit Anderson. The top prize for poetry went to Robert O'Sullivan for his poem "Brick and Steel, Glass and Sky" in response to Dan Olfe's quilt *Downtown Windows*.

"The experience was awesome," said O'Sullivan. "I hope that if Paul and Ellen decide to do another ekphrastic contest in the future, I can be one of the judges. It's a way to pay it forward. Many contests ask the winners to consider volunteering as a judge the following year."

Poet Robert O'Sullivan received first prize for his poem "Brick and Steel, Glass and Sky" in response to Dan Olfe's quilt, Downtown Windows.

Visitors to Story Quilts and Poetry enjoy Downtown Windows by Dan Olfe.

The second-place poetry prize went to Amanda Leigh Mattimoe for her poem "The Path Through Memory" in response to the three-dimensional, quilted vessels by Viviana Lombrozo, *Vessels To Hold Ephemeral Memories* and her poem "Our Histories are a Collage" inspired by the quilt *Reflections in the Glass* by Sandra Lauterbach.

Jean Taddonio received third prize for "Blue Jelly" inspired by Tara Ritacco's quilted and illuminated dress and hat, *Charged Up-Neon Jellyfish*; and Dinah Sargeant's quilt *Green-eyed Dog* referred to in her poem "Green Eye Got the Prize."

"I met Jean at the poetry reading pouring sparkling water at the refreshment table, before I knew that she had written a poem about *Charged Up, Neon Jellyfish*," said the artist, Tara Ritacco. "When I found out Jean was the poet, we gave each other a big hug. We've exchanged phone numbers and plan on getting together for lunch soon."

Vessels to Hold Ephemeral Memories *by Viviana Lombrozo*

Poet Jean Taddonio won third prize for her poem "Blue Jelly" inspired by Tara Ritacco's quilted, illuminated ensemble, Charged Up-Neon Jellyfish.

"PHES gallery promoted the artists and featured each piece with such care in lighting design to make each work of art show at its best. The collaboration of textile art with poetry readings further connected personal emotions in a shared community of artisans with a wonderful musical accompaniment.

Paul Henry and Ellen Speert put their heart and soul into creating a beautiful gallery space. They are connecting artists of different persuasions and celebrating the creative human spirit. I'm grateful to them for the many hours behind the scenes that went into this special exhibit."

Local musicians Clyde Spellinger and Casey Coe of Chickenslax entertained the gathered guests during the event. The mix of live music, poetry reading, and stunning quilted art tapped into all the senses on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Guests chatted with each other about the artwork and

mingled before and after the poetry readings, creating a memorable occasion that brought the community together for a welcoming cultural event. The exhibition had more visitors than any previous show at PHES Gallery.

All the quilts are pictured on the PHES Gallery website, Featured Artists – Phes Gallery (<https://phesgallery.com/artists/>).

Beth Smith is the managing editor and exhibitions director for *Fiber Art Now*.

← (<https://www.fiberartnow.net/blog/the-world-artnow.net/blog/customs-house-artisan-incubator/>)

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