

YAM wraps up big night with \$10,000 bid

44TH ANNUAL ART AUCTION

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Cows standing in a snowstorm ruled the night at the Yellowstone Art Museum's 44th annual art auction.

A \$10,000 bid on Ted Waddell's work, "Motherwell's Angus #24," brought a roar of approval to the crowd Saturday night. At press time it was the highest bid of the evening, and it looked like the YAM's goal of raising \$260,000 in one night would be met.

Hours before that winning bid on Waddell's painting, artists and buyers said it felt like it was going to be a big night. Billings artist Kira Fercho, who was one of 11 quick-draw artists, said when she set up her oil paints and canvas she felt good.

"The bald eagle is my animal and when I saw one on the counter here, I thought this would be my night," Fercho said.

She was right. Her painting, "Rock Creek Aspen Dance," brought the highest bid in the quick draw -- \$3,200. Then her expressive piece, "Autumn Spender," drew a winning bid of \$4,500, which was above its appraised value of \$4,195.

YAM executive director Robyn Peterson and her staff drew a standing ovation at the beginning of the live auction and Peterson thanked the standing-room-only crowd for supporting the arts.

"The proceeds of tonight will benefit education programs and exhibits and support one of Montana's greatest natural resources -- artists," Peterson said.

Out of the 600 artists who submitted works to be considered for the auction, 150 were accepted. They each donated 50 or 100 percent of the sale of their work to the museum.

Bozeman photographer Larry Blackwood said he has participated in the auction for three years because he appreciates having a museum like the YAM just down the road.

"Since we don't have a museum in Bozeman, we like to support this museum," Blackwood said.

Another Bozeman artist, Gabriel Kulka, said Saturday's night's large turnout and the enthusiastic crowd felt like a step up from last year's.

"Maybe the upturn in the economy has changed things. There is a little more spirit in the air tonight," Kulka said.

His wood sculpture "Arms Like Tall Buildings" sold for \$1,300, which was above its appraised value of \$1,150, in the silent auction.



Artist Gregory Wilhelmi works on a piece to be auctioned at the 44th annual art auction at the Yellowstone Art Museum on Saturday night.

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By 10 p.m., only three pieces were passed on because the minimum bid was not reached. This was an improvement over the past couple of years. Sidney artist Jerry Cornelia's quirky painting, "Little Sparky wished Velma would quit stewing about her ex and do something about her damn perm," sold for \$3,300, which was \$2,000 above its appraised value.

Peterson said between 20 and 25 percent of the museum's annual budget of \$1.3 million would be raised Saturday night. YAM board president Linda Shelhamer said by supporting the art auction, donors are supporting Montana artists and the next generation of artists and art lovers.

"For many kids, the Montana museums are the only place they are going to see art," Shelhamer said. "Every purchase made tonight is important to artists and their careers. Last year, you were really good to us and we got to do some special things, including the Pulitzer prize show. We had more people come in in two months than we usually have in a whole year. Thank you for your support."
