



The work of Advanced Placement students from E.O. Smith High School is on display. Brett Donovan | Staff



University of Connecticut doctoral students Anka Rao and Megan Puglia, professor Challa Vijaya Kumar of the UConn Division of Physical Chemistry and doctoral students Mensi Malhotra and Jingwen Ding present their work at the Gallery and Emporium at the East Brook Mall in Mansfield. Brett Donovan | Staff

Art at the mall

East Brook's gallery is showcase for local artists

BRETT DONOVAN
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

MANSFIELD — Art is bringing the community together in a new way.

The Windham Arts Gallery and Emporium, which opened last month in the East Brook Mall in Mansfield, provides mall visitors with a relaxing place to embrace creativity amid the hustle and bustle of shopping.

Last week, the gallery hosted an art show to showcase the creations of students in surrounding areas.

The space is a project of Windham Arts, Questers' Way and the East Brook Mall, which strives to be a community hub of expression through art.

This particular exhibit displayed work from Chaplin Elementary School students in kindergarten through sixth grade, E.O. Smith High School students and University of Connecticut doctoral students led

by Challa Vijaya Kumar, a UConn professor and head of the UConn Division of Physical Chemistry.

Windham Arts Gallery Director Stephanie Henderson said the success of this art space is important for helping the mall become more of a community lifestyle center.

"The direction that malls are moving in is, if they're going to be successful, especially in areas like this, it should be a place where communities can come together," Henderson said.

The expansive work of Chaplin students showcased the accomplishments made during a drawing unit in art class, which included chalk pastels, among other stylistic methods.

For these students, according to Chaplin art teacher Karen Avis, the focus is on exploring materials for creating art and developing their own ideas, whether working with

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Chaplin Elementary School students created 'dots' that hana from the gallery's ceiling. Brett Donovan | Staff



Framed electron microscope photography by University of Connecticut students at the Gallery and Emporium at the East Brook Mall in Mansfield are closeups of protein that have been artificially manipulated and chemically modified. Brett Donovan | Staff

Art at East Brook Mall

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warm and cool colors or learning about depth of space.

“Having their work set up next to professionals’ (art) gives them a lot of perspective,” Avis said. “The kids have loved coming in with parents and family to see it in a public place.”

She said the opportunity of displaying work in a public place is encouraging for the students, especially when people are attracted to the gallery during their holiday shopping.

“What I try to do is give them the opportunity to explore all art media,” Avis said. “As they get into sixth and seventh grade, they start to get pulled into different directions.”

Framed photographs on the gallery walls from UConn students were the product of a rather unconventional method of creating art: using an electron microscope to produce an image of protein.

“It’s protein that’s been artificially manipulated and chemically modified,” Kumar said.

The doctoral students participate in the Kumar Group at UConn, the mission of which is to create objects on the nanoscale through nature experiments and share their knowledge with the community.

The photographs, generated by the electron beam, are initially recorded in black and white with shades of gray.

The images are subsequently colored by the members of the group to supplement a degree of artistry.

Similar to taking a picture of a location like the Grand Canyon to capture the beauty of the moment, Kumar said this is very similar in the sense of capturing the beauty of nature.

“Here it’s the same thing,” Kumar said. “Nature is creating it, but it’s under a different set of conditions. The art aspect of this is nature’s art. We’re trying to connect the signs, and the art bridges that.”

More information on the Kumar Group’s work can be found online at jasmin.chem.uconn.edu/jasmin-Site/Home.

The Gallery and Emporium is open Thursdays through Saturdays from noon to 8 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.

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