

LOCAL NEWS

LOCKPORT



Bill Wippert/Buffalo News

For the first time, Pamela O'Brien of Youngstown will exhibit her tapestry creations in the show, which will open at 6 p.m. today in the Kenan Arena in Lockport.

100 Craftsmen show expands to 113

BY THOMAS J. PROHASKA

NEWS NIAGARA REPORTER

LOCKPORT — In a rough economy, some are cutting back, but the Kenan Center's 100 American Craftsmen show is growing.

The 39th annual event will offer 113 exhibitors tonight through Sunday in the Kenan Arena, 195 Beattie Ave.

The demand for spots in the high-end, juried craft show was tougher than ever, according to Steven Appler of Williamsville, one of the newcomers to be awarded a spot in the show.

"Because of the economy being how it is, there's a lot more people out there trying to do something extra," said Appler, a potter.

And that means artists have to deliver the goods, said Pamela O'Brien of Youngstown, another newcomer.

"My nose is to the grindstone frantically assembling pillows," she said the other day.

O'Brien has the unusual specialty of making tapestries based on photographs. Some are elaborate one-of-a-kind wall hangings,

while she also offers a "home decorator line" with standardized views of scenic landmarks of Western New York.

"I've done posterized designs that are a little less stitch-intensive than I can reproduce, rather than doing one at a time," O'Brien said.

The custom tapestries, which take two to four weeks to complete, cost \$150 to \$170, while the smaller ones are \$89 on a pillow or \$150 framed.

"This has developed as a fascination and a compulsion to get this right," O'Brien said.

She once made pottery and took part in the 1970s at the Allentown and Lewiston art festivals. But the Kenan Center show was a higher mountain to climb for O'Brien.

"Being a local person, I've been to almost every single one they've held," she said. "It's a show I hold in high esteem, and I finally reached the point of being good enough to be accepted."

Kenan customers don't flinch at paying higher prices, said Elaine Harrigan, Kenan Center spokeswoman.

"These people are serious shoppers. They come ready to buy," Harrigan said.

The 113-artist lineup includes 20 rookies and five master craftsmen. Artists from as far away as Texas, North Carolina and Kentucky will exhibit.

Off the floor, Lockport's Shamus Restaurant will cater lunches, and Sweet Melodies Gelato, BC Foods and the Kenan Arts Council's brownie and lemonade stand will offer treats.

The Kenan Quilters Guild will sell raffle tickets for a handmade quilt, and the Friends of the Kenan Herb Club will sell plants from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday.

Hours for the craft show will be 6 to 9 p.m. today, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Admission is \$6, although a \$10 three-day pass may be charged by phone at 433-2617.

For more on 100 American Craftsmen, see today's *Gusto*.
e-mail: tprohaska@buffnews.com