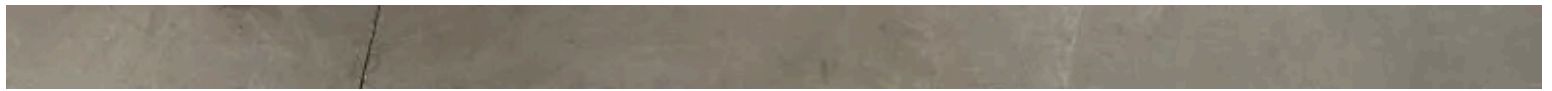


# Artists, neighbors pack Beverly Arts Center for Art Comp 48 opening night

By Kelly White  
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Ruia Mohammed, of Homer Glen, took home an Honorable Mention award for her piece titled, Mocha Reflections, at the Beverly Arts Center's Art Comp. (Photo by Kelly White)

The Jack Simmerling Gallery pulsed with energy May 9 as artists, neighbors and art lovers filled the Beverly Arts Center for the 48th annual Art Comp opening reception.

The two-hour event kicked off this year's juried exhibition, which celebrates local and regional talent across a wide range of styles and mediums. Since its founding in 1976, Art Comp has become a launchpad for artists and a tradition in the South Side's creative community.

"This is great because everybody has a chance to show their artwork, especially for those who have never been part of an exhibition before," said Matthew McKinney, associate artistic director at the Beverly Arts Center.

This year, selected artists were notified in mid-April and invited to display their work in the gallery.

The show awards more than \$5,000 in prizes, including the Beverly Bank Best of Show award, the Alice and Arthur Baer Award, and the Bill and Judie Anderson Award. Five artists received honorable mentions, and one work was selected for the Beverly Arts Center's permanent collection through a purchase award of up to \$500.

For Chicago painter Mark Banks, taking home the Alice and Arthur Baer Award marked a milestone. "This is the first juried exhibition that I've won, so it's very special," said Banks, who has been painting professionally for more than 15 years.

His entry, *The Grieving*, is an oil painting that honors America's steel workers — and his own family's legacy in the mills. "My inspiration came from my own family who has worked in the steel mills for 100 years," he said.

Former Oak Lawn Mayor Sandra Bury also joined the exhibition with an oil portrait of her sister titled *Dottie, Highland Nocturne*.

"Art is my first love," said Bury, who studied at Northern Illinois University and has painted for more than four decades. "This was a very quick painting to create, the light was perfect, and it has quickly become my favorite painting."



Jesus Gonzalez, of Chicago, took home an Honorable Mention award for his photo titled, Lebanon Hanover Poster at the Beverly Arts Center's Art Comp. (Photo by Kelly White)

Photographer Jesus Gonzalez, of Chicago, said the competition was both a new opportunity and a moment of validation.

His black-and-white image Lebanon Hanover Poster earned one of the five Honorable Mention Awards. “Photography is relatively new to me — I started in 2023, but fell in love with it,” Gonzalez said. “It feels awesome to be acknowledged and for my art to be seen.”

The show was made possible with support from Beverly Bank and Trust and continues to honor the legacy of Art Comp’s founders and the friends they named it after. The event began as a tribute to Alice and Arthur Baer, with real estate developer Arthur Rubloff and artists William and Judie Anderson among its original champions.

Submissions came from across the region, with artists paying a nominal fee — \$20, or \$15 for BAC members and college students — for a chance at professional recognition and local exposure. The exhibit is judged by a panel and staged each spring

inside one of the South Side’s most beloved community arts venues.

The May 9 reception offered more than awards. With music echoing softly through the halls and conversations spilling from room to room, it was a night of shared pride — a celebration of creative work, community presence and nearly five decades of artistic tradition.

The exhibition continues through Friday, June 6.





Sandra Bury created an oil painting of her sister titled, Dottie, Highland Nocturne, for the Beverly Arts Center's Art Comp. (Photo by Kelly White)



Artists and neighbors gathered at the Beverly Arts Center for its 48th annual Art Comp on Friday, May 9, celebrating local talent with awards and community pride. (Photo by Kelly White)