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"The art show you have to be crazy to enter" says the poster for the third annual Touched by Fire show.

Artists had to meet two criteria to submit the art for the show, which took place Nov. 26 at the [Royal Ontario Museum](#). First, the art had to be two-dimensional. Second, the artist must have first-hand experience of a mood disorder.

But at the show, it was impossible to identify which people suffered from a disorder. Everybody was dressed up, chatting pleasantly, some holding a glass of wine or beer.

"What's great about it is that we have people in tuxes, or even the average person in ripped jeans, sneakers and a t-shirt, and yet everybody just melts together beautifully," said [Joey DAMMIT!](#), a well known Toronto pop-artist. "And that's what makes it a great show."

DAMMIT! has long experience with a mood disorder himself.

"I've suffered from depression," he said. "Now it's been like 15 months without it, which is the longest. 18 years of depression can really get you."

DAMMIT! has been a part of the show planning committee since its first year, but he never misses the opportunity to submit his own art at the show.

This year he submitted a mixed-media work called "Consider the Bee." With a price tag of \$4,500, it is the most expensive piece of art in the whole show. DAMMIT! says he never intended to sell it here, but rather used the opportunity to display his best work.

"I don't think anybody is in this to make some money, I think a few aren't even for sale," he said. "It gives them a purpose, and gives them that reason to believe there is a reason to get up in the morning."

[Ralph Martin](#), another artist in the show, spoke about the changes the show underwent during its third year.

"The quality of the art continues to improve," Martin said. "It makes somebody like me nervous, because maybe my stuff isn't good enough in another year or two."

According to DAMMIT!, the show can be a great opportunity for artists who otherwise wouldn't have their work displayed.

"It gives them a chance where they probably would never have a chance to be showing their stuff in a gallery setting in front of hundreds and hundreds of people, admirers," DAMMIT! said. "There's no way that this can't be a success for them."

For Touched by Fire, the third year is a year of expansion. It is evident not only in the change of venue from the Gladstone Hotel to the Royal Ontario Museum, but also in the number of works submitted to the show.

“43 artists are represented by the 75 pieces, but we had over 450 arts submitted,” said Ellen Ostofsky, the event planner, adding that the show received as many as 650 RSVPs.

At 10 p.m., when the event was supposed to end, 28 artworks had been sold and about half the people were still there.

“It’s amazing, it’s absolutely wonderful,” said Barbara Center. “I didn’t know what to expect. It’s much more, it looks very very successful, and the artwork is terrific.”

“I love the show, I think it’s a great exposure for a really worthy cause,” said Jay Turner. “It gives people a wonderful opportunity to look inside minds that they might not normally see.”

The show was initially created by the family of Rebecca Burghardt, an artist who suffered from bipolar disorder and took her own life in 2005, and the [Mood Disorders Association of Ontario](#).

The MDAO organizes the event and maintains a [website](#). Artists use it to submit their work for the show and to sell their art all year long, with all profits going directly to the artists.

“This is an event that we created to raise awareness and bring some income to artists who have mood disorders,” said Ostofsky. “It’s very possible that someone whose art is on display here will find a new buyer, a new opportunity. That’s what we hope for.”



Joey DAMMIT! 8:04 am on November 28, 2009 [Permalink](#) | [Reply](#)

Aleksejas, a very good article that really summed up the event, and the night itself. Pleasure being interviewed by you, you not only asked the right questions, but then stepped back, and let me ramble on...and on...and on. Touched By Fire and I both thank you for taking the time, and I’m glad you enjoyed yourself (and thank you for remembering the caps and the “!”)!



Aleksejs Nesterins 12:26 am on Novemb



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Thanks Joey. Covering this show was a great environment.

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