



BEST OF BUFFALO

FINE & PERFORMANCE ART

: NOMINEES ARE LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER :



EXTREME ABSTRACTION EXHIBIT @ THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX GALLERY

PHOTO BY ROSE MATTREY

Claiming four of the top five spots for **Best Exhibit**, the **Albright-Knox Art Gallery** nearly swept the entire category. Under the leadership of AKAG director Louis Grachos and curators Doug Dreishpoon and Claire Schneider, the gallery has completely reinvented itself in the past two years. The fall 2005 show "Extreme Abstraction" was the first time in the gallery's history that a single exhibit occupied every inch of the building: walls, staircases, floors, hallways, windows, upstairs, downstairs, main building, Clifton Hall and the sculpture garden. More importantly, "Extreme Abstraction" was a powerful confirmation of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's strength and its most defining character: exemplary abstract and contemporary art.

Sailing right alongside the AKAG in *Artvoice* reader popularity is **Squeaky Wheel's** outrageously fun exhibit/art party "Love & Sex—the Peepshow," held at the Lenox Hotel. Sex-themed art installations, live music and hundreds of colorfully clad people from Buffalo's various art tribes wandered throughout the hotel sipping, ogling, chatting and bumping politely into tuxedoed gentlemen who had abandoned Mayor Brown's inaugural ball at the Hyatt for something more lively and gritty.

The finalists in the **Best Small Gallery** are something of which we should certainly be proud, too. Outside of New York City, you'd be hard-pressed to find the level of activity, energy and creativity invested here in Buffalo's small galleries. Honestly, in a side-by-side comparison we make toast out of the galleries in Rochester and Syracuse.

The **Best Dance Company** nominations are a mix running from ballet to belly dancing. Dance is the most physically demanding and disciplined fine art form. And unless you consider the hip-pumping and butt-grinding by Britney Spears art, dance is also the least rewarding in terms of fame or money. Nevertheless, whether it's attending Neglia Ballet performing *Don Quixote* or dance classes at Folkloric, UB's Zodiacque or Buffalo Contemporary, our readers continue to support dance in Buffalo.

In the **Best Fine Artist**, **Best Literary Artist** and **Best Performance Artist** categories the names appearing on ballots seemed endless. Clearly, we have a wholelottaluv for our art people and an enormous community of practicing artists. Eventually a handful of names appeared often enough to rise above the throng, and in a fine proof of Dar-

winian theory, those names truly are some of Buffalo's most talented individuals.

Voting on the **Best Actor** and **Actress** awards tends to be a silly act of camaraderie among the friends of various actors, various acting companies and loyal audience members. While all of the nominees are, indeed, very good actors—and we do disqualify animated characters and people whose only known acting has been in real-life drama—the roster should, perhaps, be thought of as a list of some of Buffalo's most fondly regarded actors and drinking companions.

The **Best Actor** nominees: **Saul Elkin**, founder of Shakespeare in Delaware Park and co-founder of Buffalo's Jewish Repertory Theatre is among Buffalo's most beloved character actors; **Jimmy Janowski**, current star of BUA's *I Am My Own Wife* is a gender-bending star of remarkable artistry; **Chris Kelly**, as well-known as an insightful director as an actor, is a performer of impressive versatility; **Vincent O'Neill**, currently starring in *Loot* for the Irish Classical Theatre Company, is a founder and mainstay of that company; **Brian Riggs**, who starred in *The Good Thief* this season, is equally adept in drama and musical theater; **Paul Todaro**, who starred in Kavinoky's production of *The Cocktail Hour* this season, is also a gifted director; and **Guy Tomassi** impressed with multiple roles this season, including hilarious turns in BUA's *Valhalla*.

Best Actress nominees: **Josephine Hogan**, star of this season's *Juno and the Paycock* with the Irish Classical Theatre, is the perennial Artist in Residence with that company; **Kelly Ann Krupski** arrived on the scene as Patsy Cline in Kavinoky's popular production of *Always...Patsy Cline*; **Lisa Ludwig** is the current star of *Urinetown* at MusicalFare (and was the *Patsy Cline* co-star at Kavinoky); **Mary Kate O'Connell** of O'Connell & Company is the silver-voiced star of her company, where *Diva by Diva* continues into perpetuity; **Leah Russo** appeared in *Number the Stars* at Theater of Youth this season; and **Maggie Zindle** starred as Aldonza in Kavinoky's *Man of La Mancha*.

As long as Broadway can produce new product, Shea's Buffalo will provide excellent entries in the category of **Best Touring Production**. This year we got some grade-A shows. Dame Edna, perhaps the most celebrated clown in the English-speaking world, made her Buffalo debut, and Cathy Rigby, the definitive Peter Pan of her generation, made her Buffalo farewell in the role. In addition, this year, Studio Arena pleased audiences, serving as a launching pad for the Broadway-bound *Ring of Fire—the Music of Johnny Cash*. Broadway didn't love the show the way Buffalo did, but though the show has closed already, it may be back as a touring show some day.

Best Theatre Company nominees: **Buffalo United Artists**; **Irish Classical Theatre**; **Kavinoky Theatre**; **MusicalFare**; **O'Connell & Company**; **Studio Arena Theatre** In this category, we compare apples to oranges, as fans of various theaters cheer for their own. It is nice to know we have so many theater companies worth voting for.

Best Actor

Vincent O'Neill
Saul Elkin
Paul Todaro
Jimmy Janowski
Guy Tomassi
Chris Kelly
Brian Riggs

Best Actress

Mary Kate O'Connell
Maggie Zindle
Lisa Ann Ludwig
Leah Russo
Kelly Ann Krupski
Josephine Hogan

Best Art Exhibit 2005-2006

The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art @ Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Love & Sex Peep Show @ Lenox Hotel
Georgia O'Keefe @ Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Extreme Abstraction @ Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Art Alive @ Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Best Dance Company

Zodiacque Dance
Pick of the Crop Dance
Neglia Ballet Artists
Folkloric Dance
Buffalo Contemporary Dance

Best Fine Artist

Peter Stephens
Peter Fowler
Courtney Grim
Catherine Parker
AJ Fries

Best Literary Artist

Ron Ehmke
Gabrielle Bouliane
David Butler
Celia White
Alexis De Veaux

Best Local Theater Production

Shakespeare in Delaware Park
Naked Boys Singing
Good
Diva by Diva
Always...Patsy Cline

Best Performance Artist

Ron Ehmke
Real Dream Cabaret
Michelle Gigante
Franklin LaVoie
David Butler
Chuck Basil
Amy Taravella
Aaron Piepszny

Best Small Art Gallery

Sixworks Art Gallery
Nina Freudenheim Gallery
Kepa 3 Gallery
Insite Gallery
Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center
College Street Gallery
CEPA
Big Orbit Gallery

Best Theater Company

Studio Arena Theatre
O'Connell & Company
MusicalFare Theatre
Kavinoky Theater
Irish Classical Theatre Company
Buffalo United Artists

Best Touring Theater Production

Ring of Fire
Peter Pan
Hairspray
Dame Edna

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