

Barton County Arts Center: Featured Artists Present Original Creations



By Maggie Lee

Photography by Keith Riggs

Even though the creative process cannot always be timed to meet specific deadlines, the featured holiday season artist at the Barton County Arts Center began making plans months in advance. Early this year, Chet Cale of Great Bend had already started visualizing the Christmas-related sculptures he would showcase in December.

“I will try to have a lot of liturgical-type stone sculptures,” Cale said last spring. “For example, Jesus on the cross is a possibility, and I really want to try to create a nativity scene in stone.

“I also will be working on some bronze sculptures and some wood pieces,” added Cale, president and board member of the Barton County Arts Council. The council owns and operates the arts center in downtown Great Bend.

Each month the gallery hosts a featured artist, whose works complement the creations of dozens of other craftsmen.

“We are home to several award-winning regional artists,” Cale said. “Many are from here in Barton County but we also accept pieces from outside our immediate area. For now, contributors are mostly from Kansas, but who knows? We are pretty open on that.”

Shoppers have a wide variety of choices in their searches for one-of-a-kind holiday gifts. “Both two- and three-dimensional pieces are available,” Cale said. “It is everything from watercolors

to computer art, to stone and wood and clay. Everything is represented and the items are both functional and non-functional.”

Cale anticipated that artists would feature a variety of holiday cards and homemade decorations. He also noted that cup sets and dinnerware are available most of the time.

A holiday shopper who may not find just *the* thing on the first visit is encouraged to stop back a little later. The arts center keeps the inventory turning over so customers have a better chance to find the perfect gift.

“If I have a couple of pieces that haven’t sold after three months, I will take them out and bring two more in,” Cale said. “I may bring the original two back again some day, but we like to keep rolling over the inventory.”

The Visual Arts Committee, composed of artists and non-artists, serves as a jury that decides if a particular work will be accepted.

Those who patronize the center have many choices for special gifts and they do their shopping in a convenient and historic setting.

An attached building has been converted to the “Back Room,” which has been used for a poetry circle, art demonstrations, chamber music, small jazz ensembles, and literary presentations.

Planning your trip

Getting there: The Barton County Arts Center, at 1401 Main in Great Bend, is across the street from the historic Barton County Courthouse. The arts center is normally open from 1 to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, but extended hours are planned for the holiday season.

Contact: The Barton County Arts Center at (620) 792-4221.



Customers find original gifts from the juried Barton County Arts Center.