

“Majestic Grille serves up exhibition of in-house talent”

By Fredric Koeppe

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"Lust", by AnnElizabeth White, is among the artwork in the exhibition "Majestic Inspiration: The Art and Music of the Majestic Grille Family."

It's a fact of the restaurant business that the ranks of waiters, bartenders and kitchen help abound with artists, writers, musicians and actors who have to supplement their meager "creative" incomes with real, honest work.

The Downtown restaurant Majestic Grille tries to return the favor, at least for some artists on the staff, with "Majestic Inspiration: The Art and Music of the Majestic Grille Family." The exhibition of work by five artists employed at the restaurant opens Aug. 12 with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Music will be provided by musicians who also work at the restaurant. Complimentary hors d'oeuvres will be created by chef Patrick Reilly, and matching wines will be offered at special prices.

"This is sort of the culmination of the art shows we've been doing at the restaurant," said manager Deni Reilly; she and her chef-husband own Majestic Grille. "We have focused on art that celebrates the history and heritage of the building," originally erected in 1913 on South Main and operating for 30 years as the Majestic Theatre No. 1. More recently, the ornate building was the home of the legendary Blue Light photography studio and two brew-pub style restaurants.

“We realized that we had attracted all of these excellent artists and musicians to work at the restaurant,” said Deni Reilly, “and when we were talking about what we should do for the next show, someone said, ‘What if we do a show of our own people?’ So that’s what we did.”

Artists in the exhibition include AnnElizabeth White, Amelia Huff, AJ Gutierrez, Anna Helton, Mario Palmer and Deni Reilly. Work in the show ranges from photography to charcoal sketches, paintings and multimedia pieces.

The restaurant will not take a commission on any art sales. “That’s part of our commitment to the arts,” said Reilly.

White, 21, is a waiter at Majestic Grille and an art major at Christian Brothers University. “I started drawing when I was young,” she said. “I would definitely like to be a studio artist, but I’ll probably major in art history and maybe work in a museum after I graduate.” White has previously shown her work in a group exhibition at Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects.

Musicians performing at the opening reception include the restaurant’s daytime lead host Keisha Moore-Alston, who sings with reggae group Queens of Zion; long-time waiter, singer and pianist Kimberly Milburn; and daytime bartender Mark Akin, lead singer and guitarist for the punk trio Subteens.

“When Deni said that she wanted to have music at the exhibition opening, of course I said yes,” said Akin, 40, who had worked for Patrick Reilly at a previous restaurant and came to Majestic Grille full-time about a year ago. “I’ve worked in some real crappy places, but this is the best. Patrick and Deni have literally kept me alive. And it’s great that so many artists of all kinds work here. It’s nice to work with like-minded people.”

“Majestic Inspiration”

A free reception for the exhibit is from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Majestic Grill, 145 South Main. The exhibit will be displayed through October. Call 522-8555 for more information.