

Arts and Culture

'Glass-half-full' art

By **Thomas Miller**
Rep/Ex Editor

The first impression of Larissa Blokhuis' exhibit *Western Connections* at the Allied Arts Council (AAC) in Spruce Grove is a feeling of floating under water.

Glass jellyfish suspended from the ceiling welcomes art enthusiasts as they venture into the Melcor Art Gallery, tucked away inside the Spruce Grove Public Library.

Blokhuis says that because they are fun and colourful, it's a good entrance point: "People are drawn to it."

The jellyfish are made of condensed glass and starts with a crucible of clear glass kept between 1,000 C and 1,500 C.

She went on to say that this piece could not have been accomplished without excellent communication between herself and her assistant due to the different bits that form the tentacles, body and hook.

Blokhuis, a graduate of the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD), has shown the exhibit in Port Coquitlam, B.C., and Red Deer, Alta., and it's on its way into Edmonton following its time at the AAC.

Blokhuis says that her exhibit is constantly evolving because some pieces are purchased or placed into galleries and new pieces must

replace the old, though not necessarily on the same theme.

The young southern Alberta artist was drawn to glass art while in art school but a chance meeting with a fellow ACAD graduate gave her some insight into the world of ceramics as well, which she had not worked with since high school.

That spurred on some mixed-media art for this exhibit, a combination of glass and ceramic that she calls "cozy."

It's a mushroom, she says, covered in moss, but that's not what anyone else sees, she added with a laugh.

"I started with a sea-creature theme (for the exhibit) and then I was moving into more land-based ideas," she explained. "These are kind of like mushroom shapes. To me the top green part feels like moss. It's soft and cozy. If you were a small animal you could just curl up in there."

On another piece, she found inspiration from a strange source: fungus.

"Fungus lives only with relationships," Blokhuis said. "There are a lot of plant species that will not grow if their fungus partner is not present. It's about combining forms. When they were all separate they didn't look like much and they didn't look like they related to each



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Larissa Blokhuis' exhibit "*Western Connections*" will be at the Allied Arts Council's Melcor Art Gallery in Spruce Grove until Nov. 22.

other. It's just an exploration of how different forms can come together to create an intact unit."

For more information on the exhibit, contact the AAC at 780-962-0664.