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Miniature art opening at Rochester gallery draws a crowd

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Less was definitely more Saturday night at Rochester Contemporary Art Center, as guests ogled 3,500 6-inch-square images for sale.

The art was tiny, but attendance was high at this offbeat fundraiser for the gallery. Shortly after the 6 p.m. opening, about 300 people crowded into the gala at 137 East Ave. More than 600 had dropped by Friday for a preview of the works — donated by artists, designers and students from as far as Indonesia and Scotland.

Paintings and prints lined the gallery walls seven rows deep. Anonymous images of flowers, penguins, nudes, space aliens and Bob Dylan vied for attention, each available for \$20.

Buyers could learn the artist's name only after making a purchase. But with a good eye, you could nab a masterpiece. Donors included well-known local artists such as photographer Carl Chiarenza, printmaker Joan Lyons and painter Kathy Calderwood. Some were prowling around the exhibit Saturday, wine or fresh strawberries in hand.

"This is a terrific idea," said Chiarenza, a 72-year-old Brighton resident. "Usually, I complain about events that depend on artists donating their art. But this is fun — an affordable way to support the cause."

His wife, Heidi, and son, Jonah also created mini-pictures for the event.

Another artistic family was inching through the crowded aisles. Daphne Stofer, the daughter of jeweler Boo Poulin, was cradling her 17-month-old son, Jack, in her arms.

"Jack took these photos with my cell phone in our South Wedge home," said Stofer, pointing toward some abstract images.

Rochester Contemporary's executive director Bleu Cease said he hopes to raise \$20,000 by the time the exhibit closes on July 6.

"We set a playful goal," said Cease. "Small art, mass participation. Looks like we're pulling it off."

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