The result was a total of 77 pieces from 47 artists who live as near as Trenton and distant as Brazil. Some graduated as recently as 2003, while one left in 1971. Not all are making a living from sales of their works, but many, like John Olsen '00, have an art-related job to pay the rent, while also following their bliss by painting, sculpting, or building visual worlds by computer.

Olsen came down from his one-room apartment in Brooklyn (paid for with a job at a Manhattan frame shop) to attend the opening reception and explain his portrait of a smiling young woman whose hair seems to be exploding with blood. It was done in alternating layers of oil paint and clear polymer, a technique that results in thin, misty tones when paint is applied to damp paint. Olsen is working hard to be noticed and was pleased to report that 15 of his paintings were then on exhibit in Atlantic City.

By contrast, Eric Gibbons '90, a fourth-generation painter, came to the College with the intent of becoming a lawyer, but switched to art under the influence of professor Chuck Kumnick and Chris Craig. After studying art in Japan for a year and teaching in an American school in Egypt for two years, he returned to New Jersey, where, in 1995, he bought The Firehouse Gallery of Bordentown. Now he teaches art full time at Northern Burlington Regional High School, operates a summer art camp, and gives private lessons in his gallery studio.

Art majors from years past filled The College Art Gallery in Holman Hall last October 20 for the opening night of the first invitational exhibition of works by alumni of the art department.

The multifaceted display overflowed the gallery into the downstairs lobby display cases. Among the works exhibited were a video of a rock band, a ceramic totem pole, illustrations for a children's book, photographs of flowers, graphic designs for commercial advertising, and paintings in oils, acrylics, watercolor, and polymers.

Art majors strut their stuff

Judy Masterson, gallery director, said more than eight months of work went into the show, part of the art department's contribution to TCNJ's Sesquicentennial. After searching the alumni database for the several hundred names of every living art major, faculty members winnowed them down to about 150 persons whom they knew were actively working in the art field. Letters went out to those graduates announcing the exhibition, asking for images or slides, and making clear it would be an invitational, juried show.

Yesterday's art majors strut their stuff

John Olsen '00

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Seeing Deborah Sawyer ’94 next to her cast-iron skillet with a handle made of matchbox toys, one could not imagine her artistic journey. Masterson recalls her as a “classic hippie” student and one of the best gallery assistants she’s ever had. Sawyer then was into photographing and painting junkyard objects and after graduation earned a master’s at Pratt Institute of Art. Since then she has worked as a guard at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, bummed around out West for a few months, returned to become an installer at the Guggenheim (she did the famous motorcycle exhibit in the ’90s), held a staff position at the Johnson Atelier in Hamilton for four years, married a sculptor and, at last report, lives in Forked River on Barnegat Bay. Once her husband gets settled into graduate school, she’ll be looking for a teaching position—an ything from welding to drawing with pastels.

Among dozens of other artists whose work was on view were Lisa Thorik ’99, who owns and teaches at a small resort for artists and writers in a fishing village near Bahia, Brazil; Colleen Hohman ’02, who loves doing graphic design for a medical communications agency in Yardley, PA; Khalilah Sabree ’89, who teaches art in the Trenton schools and shows and sells her large-size acrylic paintings locally; Christine Renton ’99, of Princeton, whose nature photography (color film, natural light) sells well at galleries in Cranbury and Manasquan; Rob Carlsen ’00, of West Philadelphia, whose company, Recvd Productions, makes videos of musical groups in performance; and Rochelle Kaiden Victor ’94, who has taught animation at New York’s School of Visual Arts for 10 years, works freelance for major firms nationwide, and exhibited drawings from a book she’s illustrating.

“The show was a huge success,” Masterson said, hinting that, in a few years perhaps, the department might be ready to do it again.

Eric is perhaps best known for his black and white figure paintings of nudes, blind drawings, and photographic monoprints such as those in the alumni exhibit. He’s shown in many New York galleries and can boast having his work in some major museums. A man of many interests, he couldn’t be at the reception, he said, because he was doing a radio interview about a book he’d just written: Christian Voodoo, A Guide to Luck, Omens, and Recipes for Homemade Miracles and Exorcism.

Clockwise from top left: Christine Renton’s “White Tulip,” Khalilah Sabree’s “Between them is a veil,” Colleen Hohman’s “Fatigue and Excessive Sleepiness invitation.”

Clockwise from top left: Eric Gibbons’s “Oz 1–9,” Lisa Thorik’s “Montage #1,” Deborah Sawyer’s “Frying Pan Series.”

Photos from left: Christine Renton ’99, Khalilah Sabree ’89, Deborah Sawyer ’94.