

## Rising stars united by a passion

In Frisco, artists find a creative outlet to plug into

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By JEREMY ROEBUCK / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Glendy Valdez reads with a pair of scissors for clipping out words, T. Scott Stromberg paints to old John Coltrane records and Julie Pici views every moment as a possible photograph.

But whatever inspires their work, the artists featured at Frisco's Rising Star Project collective exhibit say finding an artistic community in the suburbs has provided the best motivation.

"I think art intimidates a lot of people," Ms. Valdez said. "And not every artist can have a place in their home. We can offer a place to create and to let people become comfortable with art."

Hosted by the Visual Arts Guild of Frisco, the exhibit opened Saturday and features sculptures, paintings, photos and collages from eight of the guild's 150 members. And while they may live 25 miles from the closest art museum, the artists refuse to view the suburbs as a cultural vacuum.

"We really want to develop an art scene in downtown Frisco, independent of the big city," guild President Diana Moya said. "We have so much local talent in all areas that we hope to have a fully developed arts district."

Ms. Valdez, the group's co-founder, began seeking out local artists in 2000. The city referred her to the Frisco Association for the Arts.

"I showed up with my paints in hand, ready to go," she said.

But the group, organized for art patrons and enthusiasts, did not offer the relationships with working artists that Ms. Valdez sought.

"I decided right there that Frisco needed a group like the Visual Arts Guild to stress how important the arts could be," she said.

Mr. Stromberg developed an appreciation for such a community while working in New York City. He spent his idle hours wandering through aisles of Picassos and Matisse's in the city's museums. The paintings inspired the whimsical, textured designs in his own acrylic creations.

But after moving to Frisco nine years ago, Mr. Stromberg missed having his muses within a few city blocks.

"I don't have the museums, but it helps to interact with other passionate artists," he said. "You can talk about things that bore other people, and you always see something interesting in their work that you can

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Photos by LAWRENCE JENKINS/Special Contributor

The Rising Star Project collective exhibit, which opened Saturday at Frisco Square, features sculptures, paintings, photos and collages from eight of the 150 members of the Visual Arts Guild of Frisco.

appropriate."

Ms. Pici, a photographer and graphic artist, finds Frisco rife with possibilities for artistic expression. Since moving to the suburb last year, the 37-year-old has become more involved in her photography and sold several photos of boarded-up homes near the city's planned heritage park on Paige Street.

"I think I've shot more pictures since September than I have in five years," she said. "Each artist brings something to the table and every color, tree, fence, car, rock – whatever – is a possible artistic moment."

The exhibit will be on display in the breezeway of Frisco Square until June 24.

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