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NEWS

Local artist receives acclaim

Sculptor Larry Rankin Best of Show at LV Art Expo

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DAILY SOUND STAFF WRITER

Sitting in his diminutive booth at the Art Expo in Las Vegas, local sculptor Larry Rankin noticed a group of suit-decked execs marching down the aisle flanked by photographers, clearly on a mission.

As other artists paused to watch, the group stepped right up to Rankin's tiny slot and presented him with Best in Show honors in sculpting.

"It happened so quickly, it was amazing," Rankin said, admitting that receiving the top award at one of the largest international art shows on the West Coast was the last thing on his mind when he spotted the crowd.

"Honestly, my thought at that time was I wonder where they are going in such a hurry," he said.

Nearby, world-renowned sculptors with huge commissions under their belts — some with 50-foot-tall pieces in hotels around the world, others with books on

their artwork — displayed their sculptures in huge gallery settings.

Rankin, with a 4-by-15-foot booth in the expansive Mandalay Bay Convention Center, said he was just trying to make a name for himself. After the flashbulbs popped and an editor from Art Business News interviewed him, artists from throughout the showroom flooded him with congratulations.

"It showed that my peers really appreciated what I had done," he said. "It was a beautiful experience. It was very enlightening."

Rankin stumbled upon the art world back in 1974, when in the midst of business and marketing courses at Northern Arizona University he took a few art classes on the side.

"I realized I liked that more," he said with a laugh.

After moving to Santa Barbara in 1977, he opened a studio with a friend on Cabrillo Boulevard in 1979. Still working out of a Santa Barbara studio today,

Rankin has continued to sculpt with bronze, wood and stone, crafting a wide array of works from 10-inch bronze art to a collaborative, four-ton piece in stone.

Although he has received top honors at local and statewide art shows, he feels the Art Expo award marks a serious breakthrough.

"It's really the best of the best," he said.

On Wednesday, representatives from the Lake House Gallery in Noho, the Los Angeles equivalent of New York's Soho art scene, came up to discuss a large show planned for December 1.

"It's such a nice feeling when someone comes into your studio and you unveil your work ... and you hear these oohs and aahs," Rankin said. "They told me they would've taken all of my pieces if they could."

Rankin also has several pieces on display in the Corridan Gallery, at 125 Milpas St. Photographs of his work and more information can be found at www.larryrankin-sculptor.com.