More than 40 local artists have written a multimedia love letter to natural beauty in the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art exhibit “Dear Mother Nature: Hudson Valley Artists 2012,” on display now through Sunday, Nov. 4.

The exhibit is located in the museum’s Alice and Horace Chandler Gallery and North Gallery on the campus of SUNY New Paltz, 1 Hawk Drive New Paltz. For more information, call 845-257-3944 or email admx@newpaltz.edu.

The exhibit was organized by guest curator Linda Weintraub. Weintraub invited artists to send something to Mother Nature that expresses their relationship to her and their feelings about her. Participating artists include Joan Bankemper, Polly Giragosian, Claudia McNulty, Elisa Pritzker, Michael X. Rose and Riva Weinstein.

“Dear Mother Nature includes the work of 42 artists and the entire exhibition is extremely strong and memorable,” said artist Jan Harrison.

Harrison’s “Big Cat - Mountain Lion with Foliage Fur” is featured in many of the promotional materials for the exhibit and has become one of the most recognizable images of the show. The work is made from pastel and ink on rag paper and was placed in a wood frame.

“It’s a large piece,” she said. “It’s almost as big as I am.”

“Big Cat - Mountain Lion with Foliage Fur” is part of the “Dear Mother Nature.”

Harrison said she was very happy to see her piece receiving so much attention.

“That made me feel wonderful,” she said. “With two exhibitions opening in June, ‘Dear Mother Nature’ and ‘Other Than Human’ [currently on display at the Kingston Museum of Contemporary Art], things have come together. It’s very exciting for me.”

“Big Cat - Mountain Lion with Foliage Fur” is part of her “Corridor Series,” said Harrison.

“There’s a white boarder around the image,” she said. “That is the corridor that these animals live within.”

As a part of the exhibition, on Saturday, Sept. 15 at 2:30 p.m., Harrison will be performing in front of the piece using mask-like animal sculptures. The performance involves speaking and singing in what Harrison calls “animal tongues,” something she has been practicing more than three decades ago. The artist will invite audience members to ask Mother Nature questions, and “She’ll answer in animal tongues to them,” said Harrison.

Harrison said her love of animals began at an early age.

“I grew up with animals as a child and created worlds with them in my life. It’s been the theme of my work from the very beginning,” she said.

Harrison started her artistic career in 1979. Unlike some artists, she didn’t have to struggle to discover her medium of choice, she said.

“I’ve been working on pastel and ink from the beginning,” said Harrison.

This is the fourth year that a Hudson Valley Artists Annual Purchase Award of $3,000 will be used to acquire one or more artworks from the exhibition for the museum’s permanent collection. Artists whose work has been purchased in the past include Charles Geiger, Curt Belshe and Lisa Prown, Francois Deschamps, Gilbert Plantenga and Thomas Sarrantonio.

For a full list of participating artists, visit newpaltz.edu/museum/exhibitions/ exhibits/exhibitions_6.html.