

December 10, 2009

Painters and poets collaborate their work for annual Pavilion show

Jay Kirschenmann

jkirsch@argusleader.com

Collaboration often inspires creativity.

At least it worked that way for 25 South Dakota artists and 25 writers who paired to inspire each other, creating a show of collaborative works now on exhibit at the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science.

It's the second year for the P3 (Painters, Poets and Pavilion) exhibition in the Visual Arts Center.

"It's an interesting result when you combine two individual artists to come up with one beautiful piece," said David Merhib, director of the center, during Friday's opening.

He plans on hosting the collaborative show again next year, with a more aggressive push for grants and support to produce a catalog of the pieces and writings.

"The response by artists and poets has been remarkable - their professionalism and commitment toward this exhibition shows the strength of the humanities throughout this region," Merhib said.

Artists and writers come from a broad background, although four are Augustana College professors. That includes Patrick Hicks, Augie's writer-in-residence, paired with Sioux Falls artist Nathan Holman. They worked together for last year's show, too.

"I really like Nathan's work an awful lot," Hicks said at Friday's opening, looking at Holman's grinning skeleton sipping from a coffee cup.

"We understand each other's artistic philosophy, and our politics are very much the same," Hicks said. "Nathan mailed me a PDF of what he had done and said, 'How about this?' Almost immediately I had an idea for a poem. I just really like the idea of death - he's kind of relaxed, looked to me like he was on vacation."

In Holman's "Good to the Last Drop" print from a woodcut, The Grim Reaper is exhausted from his endless work during the 20th century, Hicks says in his poem "Death Takes a Breather."

For another entry, Scott Parsons, an Augustana assistant professor of art, paired with poet Beth Oness.

"I have often thought of my studio as looking like something out of a 17th-century European cabinet of wonders (wunderkammer), with the strange collection of objects I have for my students to draw," Parsons said.

He and Oness focused on the juxtaposition of a couple of objects on one of Parsons' shelves and from there created a piece of poetry and an intaglio print. Parson's print is called "Night Alchemy," and Oness' poem is "Aubade for Pam."

Also in the show is artist Carl Grupp, Augustana professor emeritus of art, who created "Gimme a Vowel," a loosely drawn pastel and charcoal piece in collaboration with poet Jerome Freeman, who wrote "Words Spew Forth in Volcanic Wonder."

Tom Shields, Augustana associate professor of art, paired with poet Allison Hedge Coke.

In Shields' artist statement for his "Tree," oils on paper, he says in part: "Trees have been a primary source of inspiration for as long as I can remember. I'm drawn to the old ones that have interesting shape and total relationships between dead branches and leaves that elicit suggestive imagery."

His painting was inspired by drawing onsite, influenced by the smells of grasses and earth and the warm sun and light reflecting leaves and branches of a cottonwood tree in the latter years of its life.

The P3 concept was brought to the Pavilion by artist Ceca Cooper and writer Kevin L. Cole, who paired their works for the show. Merhib says they also put a lot of time, energy and effort into ensuring the show's continued success.

Reach reporter Jay Kirschenmann at 331-2312, or e-mail jkirsch@argusleader.com.

Additional Facts

If you go

What: P3 (Painters, Poets and Pavilion) exhibition

When: Now through Feb. 28

Where: Visual Arts Center, Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science, 301 S. Main Ave.

Cost: Free

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday (till 8 p.m. Friday) and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Closed Mondays.

Information: 367-6000, or see the complete list of participants online at www.washingtonpavilion.org, in the Visual Arts Center section.
