

Olympian Thinks Art Something To Be Shared

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By Judy Annis

Photo by Woody Hirzel

When most people think of colleges, they think of books, instructors, bachelor's degrees and perhaps even graduate departments. Depending on their interests, they also may envision hordes of athletic huskies, homecoming queens and fraternity houses.

Perhaps last to come to mind is "public art." Yet most of the nation's colleges and universities not only maintain at least one and usually several major art galleries for display of both student and professional work, they also serve as showplaces for contemporary trends in the arts.

With the support of their local communities and the enthusiasm of student and faculty artists, most colleges manage to continually enliven and enrich their campuses with "what's new" — from the surrealistic art that brings smiles to fans to modern art to exploration of new uses for traditional media and artistic application of new technology.

This kind of enthusiasm, exploration and support of the arts has come to Olympia — and settled on Cooper Point.

Just beginning its ninth year, The Evergreen State College has already gathered an impressive collection of "public art" for display and managed to place its artistic influence in nearly every paint pot in town.

Evergreen's support of the arts began with its birth — and with the coming of the initial art faculty and the first class of students. A quick tour of the campus offers immediate, sometimes even concrete, examples of the college's dedication to the arts.

Start, for history's sake, with the Library Building, the first structure to open when classes began in 1971. That first winter, students found Olympia to be a wet and somewhat dreary place, made more so by the grayness of college buildings and the ever widening sea of mud which surrounded campus construction.

Before winter had passed, students and faculty artist Jose Arguelles decided something artistic had to be done to brighten their new and somewhat sterile environment — thus the "dragon" was born.

Winding its way up four stories of the Evans Library Building staircase is this lasting tribute to "man and art" in the form of a dragon mural which passes through the four main elements of earth, water, air and fire.



Nearly hidden in the leafy confines off a college walkway, this winsome creature often startles night visitors to the college.

ing an array of color and techniques, and a vast supply of student imagination.

That same year, Colville artist Lawney Reyes of Seattle completed what has become a favorite symbol of college art — the library doors.

Built as a memorial to former Olympia teacher Robert Kindschy, the doors adorn the entry to the Fourth Floor Library Gallery and feature a large sculptured owl mounted on oak doors and adorned with turquoise.

Reflecting the native American heritage of the Pacific Northwest, the seven-foot carved owl invites visitors to touch its smooth, grained surface before viewing the latest display in the gallery, one of two maintained on campus, under the direction of faculty member Sid White, throughout the regular academic year.

"With both galleries, we strive to present to our students and the public displays of art that offer variety, that encourage understanding and that represent our rich cultural heritage," White explains.

Recent exhibits shown in the two library galleries in-

clude the "One with the Earth" display, which featured native American treasures spanning hundreds of years of artistic creation on this continent; and the "Japanese Woodblock" show which exhibited works by five major Japanese silkscreen artists. Student and faculty work often is featured in both galleries, as is the case this summer with the continuing photographic shows presented by visiting faculty members and students in the summer photography institute.

Both galleries are open to the public (no admission charged) and have become special attractions for campus visitors. But persons who just visit the library and its galleries will miss other major public art on display throughout the campus.

From the library, visitors who head east across campus will find a large concrete sculpture complementing the entrance to the Recreation Center.

Created by Harold Balazs of Mead and donated to Evergreen by Tacoma architect Robert Price, the 10-foot-tall, one-ton creation was constructed of Columbia

Bluff concrete to match the colors of campus buildings and, says Balazs, to "complement the extensive and simple treatment of concrete surfaces on campus.

Installed in 1973 on the bridge linking the Recreation Center and the College Activities Building, the unnamed Balazs sculpture invites small children to explore its jungle-gym-like structure while it pleases the adult eye with an abstract design that Balazs says "relates to recreation and depicts a combination of many of the seemingly disparate elements in the world around us."

Just northeast of the Recreation Center, the determined art explorer will discover in the campus residence halls five large murals and a tile mosaic created in 1975 by students under the direction of visiting artists Lucienne Block and Stephen Pope Dimitroff.

The fresco murals, depicting scenes at Evergreen, of nature and of old world cultures, adorn the stairwells of Residence Hall A and "The Corner," a frequent meeting place for students who live on campus.

Their creation celebrated a

major art happening on the Evergreen campus — the arrival for six months of the Dimitroffs. The couple, who immigrated to the United States from Europe, came to Evergreen for a two-quarter academic program to share with students their combined 80 years of experience gaining an international reputation while creating major art works on buildings throughout this country. They helped students develop skills with acrylic paint, fresco and mosaics, and they created a lasting testimonial to the art of mural painting.

A completely different kind of public art arose on campus in 1976 from the creative hands of students in the Foundations of Visual Arts program. After studying the use of gargoyles in medieval architecture, students became intrigued with the fanciful creatures who were traditionally used as water spouts and projected from the gutters of buildings.

The Evergreen gargoyles, five in all, were crafted to decorate campus buildings, but came to rest, instead, on the green slopes of the lawn behind the Laboratory Annex. The two surviving creations of that year-long study program offer visitors a lighthearted tribute to ceramic art — but one that can be startling on a dark night if you don't know the little creatures exist.

Just northwest of the two gargoyles stands another creation of that 1976 foundations study program — a large "pink cube." Made of cast concrete, the structure was completed winter quarter of 1977 and, after several months of display in front of the Evans Library was moved to its permanent home behind Laboratory Building Two.

The college's latest major external art work also came to campus in 1977 when Seattle sculptor Robert Maki completed the somewhat controversial "Trapezoid Square," which rests just outside the main entrance to the Communications Building.

Made of corten steel, the piece was the first major work purchased by the college with funds reserved by the 1974 "one-half of one percent" law. That legislation mandated that one half percent of capital funds for construction of state buildings be dedicated to the purchase of art works.

Also paid for by the "one-half percent" funds from the Communications Building is what's probably the state's

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...Public Art Plays Prominent Role At Evergreen

largest fiber sculptural hanging.

Crafted by Tacoma weaver Sande Percival, the hanging was designed to beautify the three-story glass and concrete performing arts building. To achieve that goal, Ms. Percival wove more than 600 pounds of natural wool, devoted more than 1,500 hours of labor and created a warm tribute to "arts in motion" that surprises and pleases most visitors to college dramatic and musical productions.

Unlike the large sculptures, found both inside and outside of college buildings, not all of Evergreen's art is on constant public display. The largest collection of art — again purchased with "one-half percent" funds — has been displayed twice within recent years.

Initially called the Lab II collection because the pieces were paid for with monies reserved from construction of the Laboratory Phase Two science-art building, the Evergreen collection represents literally years of work by Evergreen faculty members Susan Aurand and Paul Sparks.

Together, the two worked with a dozen members of

Evergreen's Visual Environment Group to define procedures for purchasing art works using those funds. Then the team spent months viewing slides, traveling to displays and talking to artists before selecting a varied collection of pieces by West Coast artists who, say Sparks and Ms. Aurand, are "strong artists but not necessarily widely known."

Included in the Evergreen collection is a survey of American photography by six artists, a number of fiber pieces, a small array of contemporary sculptural ceramics, and a variety of prints and drawings.

Each year the campus galleries will feature portions of the collection which, says exhibits coordinator White, will be shared with other galleries and museums.

Sharing Evergreen's art through organization of traveling exhibits has been a college goal since White and others completed the Washington Printmakers Collection for the college library in 1972.

Selected by a jury of Evergreeners, Olympians James Haseltine and Del McBride and Seattle teacher Joel Jessen, the print collection features more than 50 Washington artists — from professionals such as Paul Brekke of the Factory of Visual Arts and Keith Achepohl of Pacific Lutheran University to student work by Helen Buchanan of Gig Harbor and Clifford Castle of Eastern Washington University.



"You Capture My Heart" says this three-dimensional creation by Patty Marashina. The brightly colored ceramic sculpture is among some 50 art works in the Evergreen collection.

The Printmakers Collection, first exhibited in 1972, is offered to colleges, universities and public schools each year for display.

New to Evergreen's traveling exhibits each year are two other collections: the "poster show" featuring a wide assortment of art created by student and professional artists to publicize Evergreen events; and the Photomicroscopy and Computer Graphics display organized by White, in collaboration with staff member Martin Beagle and faculty scientists Dr. Donald Humphrey and Dr. Fred Tabbutt.

Both offer unusual treatments of art — applying an array of media and techniques to pass on information and further enrich the community. And both will be displayed periodically on campus as well as off, White promises.

Also not yet on display is a new contribution to Evergreen's public art, a print by Seattle artist Glen Alps, donated to the college by Olympia businessman Fred Goldberg.

Goldberg hopes — and White concurs — that his contribution will be the beginning of many more donations to the art collections at the college — collections the two men believe offer the public cultural enrichment, educational insight into the arts and just plain fun.

Further information about any of Evergreen's public art may be obtained from White (phone 866-6119) or the Office of College Relations (866-6128).

(Judy Annis is Evergreen's director of information services.)

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The Pink Cube stands behind the Laboratory Two Building, a lasting tribute to the 1976 Foundations of Visual Arts program, whose students created it.

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