

Art Gallery hosts int. collaborative visual arts project

BY MATTHEW LIEBENBERG —
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The Art Gallery of Swift Current (AGSC) is currently hosting an international art exhibition that resulted from a collaborative visual art project between the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba, Australia.

The gallery held an opening reception for the exhibition *Antipods: Magical creatures with backward feet* on July 8.

The event was attended by Prof. Susan Shantz and four students from the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Art and Art History as well as Dr. Beata Batorowicz, a senior lecturer in sculpture and visual arts at the University of Southern Queensland.

Prof. Shantz approached AGSC Director and Curator Kim Houghtaling a few months ago with the idea of showcasing the project in Swift Current.

"It sounded wonderful," Houghtaling said. "I'm really glad we went ahead with it. I'm pleased that we're able to offer this show in the summer time when we have lots of visitors."

It has always been the AGSC's goal to offer exhibitions that are development opportunities for young artists.

"We especially like to feature young artists that are from the Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan area, but this was a unique opportunity," he said. "It was a very well-organized, sophisticated exhibition project that was being offered to galleries around the province by a well-respected professor at the University of Saskatchewan."

The exhibition provides local art lovers with some insight into contemporary visual art trends and the approach of young artist to their work, which is made even more interesting by the collaboration between two universities on different sides of the planet.

"That international connectivity is really significant," he said. "I like the fact that this is tangible work that is exchanged between the two places because in this day and age and with this generation they're very used to being connected with people and places all over the world through access to the internet, but those are virtual relationships."

This project takes that connectivity a step further through the artistic efforts of the students on the two continents.

"They have to really deal physically with their relationship in responding to the work of another student and then showing together in the same gallery space," he said. "I think that is a pretty outstanding opportunity and the results are really inspired."



University of Saskatchewan art student Ali Ahmed speaks about his work during the opening reception for the exhibition *Antipods: Magical creatures with backward feet* at the Art Gallery of Swift Current, July 8.



Photo by Matthew Liebenberg

Dr. Beata Batorowicz of the University of Southern Queensland speaks during the opening reception for the exhibition *Antipods: Magical creatures with backward feet* at the Art Gallery of Swift Current, July 8.

The project was a result of Prof. Shantz's visit to the University of Southern Queensland campus in May 2014. That trip also gave her the idea to approach the AGSC because Dr. Batorowicz did a project with a community gallery in the town of Miles, about three hours from Toowoomba.

"I thought that was a really interesting idea," Prof. Shantz said. "I had travelled a little bit out, not exactly into Miles, but that area, and it struck me as being somewhat landscaped like southern Saskatchewan. So I thought that could be neat to come down here and show the work here in a place that's geographically a little bit akin to Queensland."

The distance and different time zones made this collaboration between the students a real challenge.

"Functionally it was a bit like taking a stab in the dark because as one student said, while we were awake they were sleeping," she mentioned. "So you couldn't really communicate with them directly but it made this kind of interesting blank imaginative space because they weren't in school when we were in school."

The project started with the creation of art pieces by the Australian students. The Canadian students then had to respond to these works by selecting a specific art piece to react to with their own creations.

"It's sort of risk taking to go out of your familiar comfort boundary but that's how you often move and change as an artist, trying new things," she said.

The project provided additional learning opportunities for the students at both universities. Their art pieces had to be portable and lightweight for transportation to another country, they had to prepare assembly instructions for their works and they are involved in setting up the artworks in the gallery spaces for the exhibitions.

According to Prof. Shantz the installation of the art pieces at the AGSC was a good experience for the three



University of Saskatchewan art student Elizabeth Babyn speaks about the Australian artwork.

students who were there to help.

"They learned a lot from the people here at the gallery," she said. "They're really excellent at what they do. So they were mentoring the students as well in terms of how to work in a gallery."

The artworks have previously been on display in two separate gallery spaces in Saskatoon, but the AGSC exhibition is the first opportunity to display all the pieces in the same gallery.

Dr. Batorowicz helped to set up the exhibition in Swift Current.

"It's really nice to be present and to actually meet the students and install the exhibition together, which is a very

different process as opposed to just coming in and seeing the exhibition," she said. "So the dialogue really started to come together and it's just nice to see how my students' works come together with the Canadian students' works as well."

The Australian students are just as excited as their Canadian counterparts to be part of this collaboration between the two countries.

"For an undergraduate to be a part of an international exhibition is a very big deal," she said. "So they understand that not only are they getting an education in terms of making art, but they actually have to step up as professional artists and really make an exhibition as opposed to just an assessment item. So this is a really big thing and they're launching their careers as contemporary artists, which is really important. And then through this exchange they're actually forming new networks as well that could be a long-term thing too."

The exhibition will be on display at the art gallery in Swift Current until Aug. 22. Thereafter, the artworks will travel to Australia for an exhibition at the University of Southern Queensland Arts Gallery that will open in mid-September.

Buffalo

Buffalo Fall Fair celebrating 40 years Aug. 7

BY HEATHER JAQUES

Buffalo is a small hamlet located on Highway 555, between Bindloss and Jenner and is one of the few places in rural southern Alberta, which is still the site of an annual country fair.

The 2014 Fair had 633 entries, with participants from B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan.

This year to add to the celebrations a number of children's activities will take place. The Fair opens at 4 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 7.

There will be a fish pond, cookie decorating, face painting, and of course the popular giant Bouncy Castle set up by the outdoor playground. For the adults, organizers hope to have some demonstrations and Mary Ann Barnett will be back this year with her Bosch display making buns.

A roast pork loin supper with all the trimmings, is planned for 5.30 p.m. Special entertainment this year includes Johnny Cash Impersonator CASHBACK coming. The group featuring Dave Norman as "The Man in Black", is well known in Canada for performing authentic versions of one of the world's music icons.

From the early hits of the fifties right up to his latest album, they do an outstanding presentation of the music that made Johnny Cash legendary. Check them out on the website: www.cashbackmusic.net. Tickets for the dinner and show are \$20 per adult, with those ages six to 12 years \$10 each, and children younger than six years free.

There is always a short awards ceremony after supper, where trophies and cash prizes are handed out. Last year's total included more than \$1,500 in prize money.

Not only the conventional awards receive recognition,

but there are cash prizes for the best potato, peaches, dill pickles, banana bread, tomatoes, machine loaf, jam or jelly, tastiest cookie, hard red spring wheat sample, quilt, most outstanding exhibit, and for recycled items.

There are a number of junior cash awards, which include school entries. A new addition to the list this year is the Annie Kulyk Memorial prize.

This is a \$50 cash award for the total high points accumulated by siblings in a family.

Entries for the Fair are accepted on Aug. 6 from 7-8 p.m., and Aug. 7 from 9-10.30 a.m.

Arrangements can also be made with local residents to drop off entries in advance. Marg Shonhofer at 403-379-2272, Lorraine Monkman at 403-379-2222, and the writer of this article may be contacted at 403-379-2101.

Fair booklets are available at Buffalo and Jenner post offices, and in Oyen at Blue Mountain Crafts.