

# BC3 grad's art targets violence against women

“Solace in the Abstract” opens gallery’s fall 2018 season

Aug. 13, 2018



Nick Kahle, of Clarion, a 2016 Butler County Community College graduate, is shown Tuesday, July 31, 2018, with “Societal Corruption of the Feminine,” among the paintings in his “Solace in the Abstract” exhibit that targets violence against women and opens Aug. 26 in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus.

(Butler, PA) Nick Kahle had just left, the acrylic paint his fingertips directed across 20 square feet barely dry when the blacks and blues and yellow-greens on his canvas drew a Butler County Community College student into a studio occupied only by fine arts instructor David Ludwick.

“She had been walking in the hallway,” Ludwick said, “and looked in the open door. She wasn’t a student that I had had in art class. I know nothing about her. Don’t know her name.”

The student approached Kahle’s 4-foot by 5-foot “Societal Corruption of the Feminine” and stopped 10 feet short of the painting – whose subject’s right eye is encircled in black, its left, bruised and swollen shut -- and, Ludwick said, “started to cry.”

For five minutes she stared at the canvas, Ludwick said.

“We didn’t talk,” Ludwick said. “I knew what was going on.”

The student mouthed only the word “wow” before leaving with tear-filled eyes.

“Societal Corruption of the Feminine” is the centerpiece of 15 works in Kahle’s first public exhibit, “Solace in the Abstract,” much of which depicts violence against women and which opens Aug. 26 at the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus.

“When David told me about that student, my eyes got a little glassy and I got a wave of goosebumps because I knew,” Kahle said. “I knew that whatever experience she was feeling in her life, it resonated through that piece.”

## “I felt the oppression of the topic”

The 27-year-old Clarion resident, who attained an associate of applied science



“Split,” a painting by 2016 Butler County Community College graduate Nick Kahle, of Clarion, is shown Thursday, Aug. 9, 2018, in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus. Kahle’s first public exhibit, “Solace in the Abstract,” much of which targets violence against women, opens Aug. 26.



“Intertwined,” a painting by 2016 Butler County Community College graduate Nick Kahle, of Clarion, is shown Thursday, Aug. 9, 2018, in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus. Kahle’s first public exhibit, “Solace in the Abstract,” much of which targets violence against women, opens Aug. 26.



degree in graphic design from BC3 in 2016, returned to his alma mater for nine hours to create “Societal Corruption of the Feminine” over two consecutive April afternoons.

“When I first started painting it, I did start to feel a lot of emotion on the heavier side of the spectrum,” Kahle said. “There was a point where I didn’t get depressed, but I felt the oppression of the topic. It started coming over me when I was painting it.”

Kahle, himself a survivor of abuse, said the process of painting “is just as much a release for me as it is in trying to bring a release to the service for someone else. During that time that I am creating, emotions inside of me from my past build up. And I start to get tension that I need to put down.”

He left the studio that second afternoon knowing “what I wanted to do was done. A sense of relief immediately following the heavy storm.”

It was as if “the batteries were dead when he was done,” Ludwick said. “It was like, ‘Everything I’ve got is on that canvas.’”

A reception for Kahle, whose exhibit also includes drip paintings, will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 26.

“There is a story to go along with their pain”

“Solace in the Abstract” targets misogyny and violence against women, said Kahle, who created the paintings within the past two years.

“Many of my female friends who I am close with, there is a story to go along with their pain,” Kahle said. “That is why I want to get the message out.”

A third of all women in the United States have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. One in seven has been injured.



“Rebuke,” a painting by 2016 Butler County Community College graduate Nick Kahle, of Clarion, is shown Thursday, Aug. 9, 2018, in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus. Kahle’s first public exhibit, “Solace in the Abstract,” much of which targets violence against women, opens Aug. 26.

“This is not a show where you come to find a pretty piece to hang above your sofa,” Ludwick said. “This is one where you come away and you think about it. This is emotionally powerful. Maybe not uplifting. But it is not meant to be. It is meant to provoke thought. It is meant to provoke debate. Discussion. Action.”

Kahle, whom Ludwick calls one of the most talented of the nearly 3,000 students he has instructed at BC3 since 1998, says he hopes the outcome of his exhibit will be the “exposure of the problem. And a sense of common ground that women are not dealing with violence alone. I feel like once you find the common ground in the sense that you are not alone, a base gets formed there. There is power in unity in knowing that you are not alone.”

His painting technique is primarily freehand, Kahle said.

“No brushes,” he said. “No predetermined reference photos. Just paint, a putty knife, a flow applicator like a squirt bottle or a paint bottle to throw paint, and the emotion or topic I want to release that I’ve been dwelling on.”

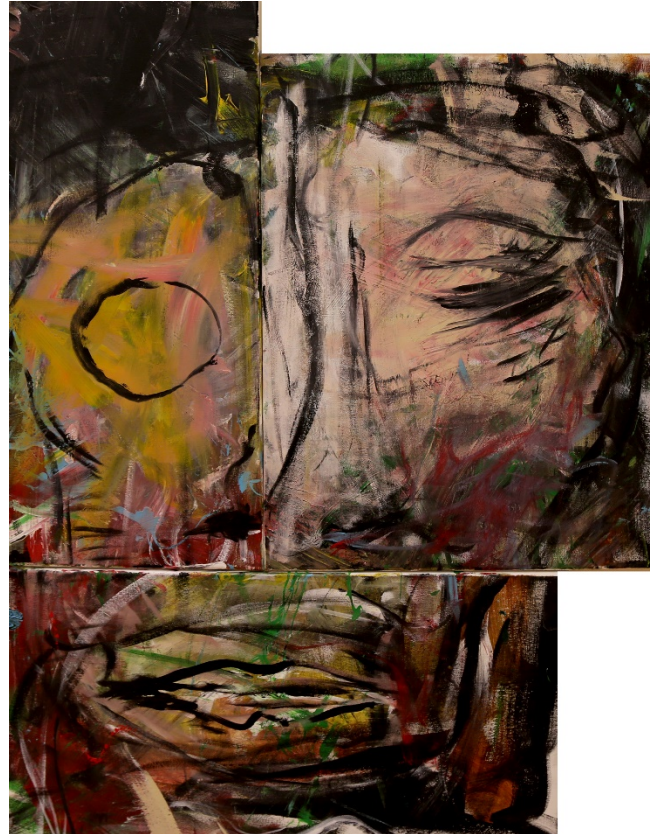
Underneath the blacks and blues and yellow-greens on Kahle’s hands, and canvas, Ludwick said, is a sense of hope.

“Out of confronting issues and discussion and debate, and finding a way forward,” Ludwick said, “and hopefully, that we are moving forward and maybe making the world a better place.”

## BC3 exhibits also set for October, November

Kahle’s show will continue through Sept. 20.

A 20-piece exhibit of Ludwick’s oil impasto and acrylic paintings, created since January and titled “Recent Paintings by David Ludwick,” will follow in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery in October. The show depicts western Pennsylvania landscapes from Erie to Pittsburgh and will include eight 3-foot by 3-foot works and a dozen 6-inch by 6-inch panels.



“Inner Light,” a three-piece painting by 2016 Butler County Community College graduate Nick Kahle, of Clarion, is shown Thursday, Aug. 9, 2018, in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus. Kahle’s first public exhibit, “Solace in the Abstract,” much of which targets violence against women, opens Aug. 26.

BC3's fall 2018 student art showcase is planned for November, Ludwick said.

The Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call the BC3 Education Foundation Inc. at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8161.