

BC3's Student Art Showcase reveals bold colors, bolder imaginations

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Butler County Community College's fall 2018 Student Art Showcase features 50 select works created by 44 students from BC3's main campus in Butler Township, BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township and BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage. Among the pieces are, top row, from left, a wire and wrench scorpion by Eric Drake, of Slippery Rock; and "George at Peace," a textured acrylic painting memorializing the late George A. Nicikowski, by his son, Joseph Nicikowski, of Greenville. Center row, from left, "3-D Flower," a charcoal drawing by Elmer Ebeck of Cranberry Township; and a detail of "No. 4," an abstract acrylic painting by Eileen Vaughn, of Butler. Bottom row, from left, a detail of "The Great Gig in the Sky," an acrylic impressionistic painting by James Ru, of Butler; and a papier mache dragon by Misty Roolf, of New Castle.

(Butler, PA) The neon-yellow left eye of an attentive panther stares beyond neon-blue flora within Megan Divers' "Purrs Under the Palms," past the neon-green palm fronds arching outside her 3-foot by 4-foot unframed canvas, and absorbs the 49 other selected works adorning walls and pedestals in Butler County Community College's fall 2018 Student Art Showcase.

Within its view, across the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery, there's a scorpion bent into form by Eric Drake, of Slippery Rock, bronze and silver wire binding an abdomen and stinger repurposed from rusted bicycle chains, its pincers once serving as closed- and open-ended wrenches.

Between Divers' panther and Drake's scorpion rises a 30-inch-tall papier mache dragon bust, molded atop chicken wire by Misty Roolf, of New Castle, its 14 inch-long teeth guarding a cavernous mouth.



Megan Divers, 19, of Petrolia, is shown Monday, Nov. 5, 2018, in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on Butler County Community College's main campus with her "Purrs Under the Palms." The neon acrylic painting is among 50 works selected to be exhibited in BC3's fall 2018 Student Art Showcase.

Nearer still, a textured acrylic painting memorializing George A. Nicikowski, and conceived by his son, Joseph, of Greenville, who infused a teddy bear within the 14-inch by 11-inch tribute by incorporating a flannel shirt once worn by his father, who passed away 18 months ago.

"The best of the best"

BC3 art instructors David Ludwick, David Todd and Beth Anne Black culled the works in BC3's fall 2018 Student Art Showcase from 150 pieces painted, drawn or sculpted by students attending BC3's main campus in Butler Township, BC3 @ Cranberry in Cranberry Township and BC3 @ LindenPointe in Hermitage. The exhibit highlighting the imaginations of 44 students is on display through Dec. 3 in the gallery on BC3's main campus.

"This show," Ludwick said, "is meant to be the best of the best. It gets better and better each time."

Refreshments will be available during an artists' reception from noon to 3 p.m. Nov. 14 at the gallery, where visitors can view realistic, impressionistic and abstract imagery designed by brush

strokes, finger techniques and knifework directing oil and acrylic paints; black-and-white drawings outlined and filled with graphite, charcoal pencil and pen and ink; and sculptures shaped from clay, light- and medium-gauge wire, and paper, glue and water.

The 50 selections in BC3's third Student Art Showcase since fall 2017 range in size from 3 inches by 3 inches to 5 feet by 4 feet, said Ludwick, who is also curator of the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery.

Fifty BC3 students this fall are studying introduction to art, 31 are enrolled in drawing, 30 in introduction to painting and six in sculpture, according to Sharla Anke, BC3's assistant dean of institutional research. Sixteen are pursuing an associate degree in fine arts, among them, Divers, a 19-year-old from Petrolia who said she spent more than 20 hours on "Purrs Under the Palms."

"I started it a while ago on my own time, around April," Divers said, "but for a good long while I ignored it."

It's difficult to ignore in the corner of the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery, fellow BC3 fine arts student Allison Curboy said.

"Megan is on fire," said Curboy, 30, of Sarver. "I am impressed by the bold technique she used and the colors, how they mix together so well."

"Cooler without the pupil"

Divers' piece, said Ludwick, "is really unique. A lot of the effectiveness of that painting comes from her color theory and combinations. Probably of everything in the show, her colors are the most intensive."

Neon browns, burnt oranges, coppers, pinks, purples, teals, turquoises and violets emanate from a canvas that captures Divers' fascination with exotic jungle themes.

"I like bold colors," Divers said. "I don't usually delve into this much color. I've done that only once or twice before. Usually I do more muted colors. I like the feel that this gives."

Gallery visitors can stare themselves at the attentive panther's neon-yellow left eye – "I was actually going to put the pupil in it," Divers said, "but I decided that it looked cooler without the pupil and it gave the panther more of a spiritual look" – Drake's scorpion, bound and wound by 18- and 24-gauge wire; Roolf's dragon that, she said, took 100 hours to complete; and "George at Peace," Nicikowski's painting to honor his late father, a portion of which includes the hint of what was once a radiant light.

"The afterglow," Joseph said, "represents the memories and meaning that he still has to people."

BC3's fall 2018 Student Art Showcase is the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery's sixth exhibit since Jan. 1.

It follows Ludwick's "Recent Paintings by David P. Ludwick," a display of western Pennsylvania landscapes; "Solace in the Abstract," by BC3 graduate Nick Kahle, of Clarion, which depicted violence against women; and "Eclectic in Oil," by BC3 student Eileen Vaughn, of Butler, a collection of landscapes and portraits drawing on her travels to 46 states and to 30 countries.

The gallery in 2018 has also hosted BC3's spring Student Art Showcase and "The Right to Peaceful Assemblage," a series of inverted sculptures by BC3 graduate Carol Griffiths, of Erie.

The Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery, open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays, will also feature 25 selections from the BC3 Education Foundation's permanent collection from mid-December through mid-January, Ludwick said.