

# Dynamic BC3 artists energetic about showroom showpiece entry

Online voters, judges and dealership visitors to decide fate of four-paneled creation

Feb. 26, 2018



First frame: David Ludwick, right, a fine arts instructor at Butler County Community College, on Monday, Feb. 12, 2018, explains to BC3 introduction to painting students that include Megan Divers, left, of Karns City, and Tyke Vaughn, center, of Butler, a competition in which they will create a painting that illustrates the dynamics of fluid motion across four canvas panels. Center frame: Divers, left, Gloria Smith, of Petrolia, and Cole Myers, of Karns City, apply thin coats of cadmium orange, red and yellow on the canvases Feb. 12. Right frame: Ludwick on Feb. 12 uses a blow dryer to hasten the drying time of white primer used to cover a mistake made with the feather-brushing of black paint on the fourth canvas.

(Butler, PA) Students Tyke Vaughn, Megan Divers and Cole Myers, and instructor David Ludwick, stand silently at the front of Classroom 101 inside Butler County Community College's Arts and Hospitality Building, paint-covered fingers hidden within folded arms, eyes darting left to right across a series of four 24-inch by 48-inch canvas panels leaning against cabinetry 20 feet distant.

Myers tilts his head to the right.

Divers, to the left.

"I think, Ludwick pronounces at 10:08 a.m. Feb. 21, "it's done."

Only after four minutes of contemplating Ludwick's proclamation – and aside half-empty quarts of cadmium orange, red and yellow acrylic paint, spent 8-ounce transparent squirt bottles with interiors stained white, black and black cherry, 2-inch foam rollers and 1-inch brushes – do the students reapproach their project.

Their painting is one unlike any other in Ludwick's 20-year career at BC3, one that took five hours over three classes to create and re-create – and one that as a winning contest entry would be showcased above a Butler automobile dealership's showroom floor.

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Following the September redesign and expansion of their showroom, Dennis Baglier, owner of Baglier Mazda and Baglier Buick GMC, and company consultant Bill Rettig, of Wheeling, W.Va., decided a seafoam-hued 14-foot-high, 15-foot-wide wall at Baglier Mazda “was just too nice to be bare,” Rettig said. They decided to sponsor a competition among BC3 and Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania art students, and the Associated Artists of Butler County.



Wess Ewell, marketing and information technology coordinator for Baglier Mazda and for Baglier Buick GMC, is shown Friday, Feb. 23, 2018, in front of a seafoam-hued 14-foot-high, 15-foot-wide wall at Baglier Mazda, where the winning entry in a painting contest sponsored by the company will be placed.

Baglier Mazda provided to competitors four panels and one set of instructions – to illustrate “dynamics of fluid motion” across the canvas pieces, said Rettig, 72, a Butler native and watercolorist since age 6.

“Motion in the abstract,” added Wess Ewell, the company’s marketing and information technology coordinator.

Winners will receive \$1,000. Second- and third-place finishers each get \$250. Only the winners’ work will be displayed in the showroom along Route 68.

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“We are going to do a complementary color scheme,” Ludwick, a fine arts teacher, tells 16 students in his introduction to painting class Feb. 12 in announcing their participation in the project. “The showroom is kind of aqua in color, like the bottom of a swimming pool. What we are going to do is a painting in oranges, reds and yellows, the colors opposite on the color wheel. That should just make this jump off the wall.”

While students unravel a 12-foot by 9-foot drop cloth onto the floor and position atop of it the canvas panels side-by-side, Ludwick says the application techniques will include “Everything. Traditional brush work. Mini-rollers. Squirt bottles. Maybe some finger-painting. This is really going to be a homage to Jackson Pollock and his philosophy of action painting. He rolled his canvas out on the floor and worked right on top of it.”

Pollock, an American abstract expressionist, flung and dripped thinned enamel paint onto an unstretched canvas on his studio floor, according to the Museum of Modern Art, New York. “This direct, physical engagement with his materials welcomed gravity, velocity and improvisation into the artistic process,” according to MoMA, “and allowed line and color to stand alone, functioning entirely independently of form.”

“The only directions I am going to give you,” Ludwick tells his students, “is energy, excitement and movement.”

Energy, excitement and movement that should emanate from the bottom left of the first panel through the top right of the fourth, according to Ludwick, with each canvas to be separated by 1 inch on the showroom wall, Rettig says.

“A horizontal movement tends to create a feeling of tranquility and rest,” Ludwick says. “A diagonal movement creates energy and tension. That is what we are looking to do.”

Vaughn dips a 2-inch foam roller into a tray of cadmium yellow and is the first to tint the primed white canvas, a circular pattern at the bottom of the first panel. Divers, Myers, Gloria Smith and Rilye Hanby add thin sweeps of red using 1-inch brushes.

“We don’t want to get into a smaller brush and get too picky and tight with it,” Ludwick says. “I always remember what my favorite painting teacher from college said: ‘Never grab a teaspoon when you need a shovel.’”

“Sometimes when you use a smaller brush, you tend to draw with the paint,” Ludwick says. “With the smaller brush, you are inclined to hold it like a writing instrument. And that translates to drawing with the paint.”

Over the next 45 minutes, students draw on Ludwick’s advice, dragging streams of red leaping from a paint stick across the yellow and orange canvases, apply dots of white indiscriminately hither and thither, and recognize a mistake made by feather-brushing squirted black paint, an error that becomes the focal point of their creation – and of their concern.

“I think the worst thing that happened was the blending of that black,” says Vaughn, of Butler.

“Yes,” Ludwick responds.

“Now it just looks dirty,” Vaughn says. “Dirty and busy.”

Black paint, Ludwick says, “does some really funky things when it gets in with the other colors, especially with yellow. It will turn Army green.

“It has to just sit on top.”

Ludwick’s students end their Feb. 12 class by flooding the top right section of the fourth panel with white primer – obscuring the unsightly brushed black paint, and with it, the tapestry of

warm oranges, yellows and reds with which it coalesced – then use blow dryers to hasten the drying time.

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Paintings created by BC3 and SRU students, and the Associated Artists of Butler, will hang in Baglier Mazda’s showroom Thursday through March 31, Rettig said. The winning entry will be based on the results of three scenarios: A panel of three judges who have yet to be identified, Rettig said, and votes cast in the showroom and at [bagliermadza.com](http://bagliermadza.com).

The company’s website beginning Thursday “will bring up the three pieces of art,” Ewell said. “You select which one you like. You enter your name and email, which is what we are requiring so that we can limit one vote per email per person. That way we are not getting anyone flooding the vote.”

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First frame: Ludwick showed his students a photograph of the Horsehead Nebula, left, torn from a calendar, that provided inspiration and direction on Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2018, halfway through their project. Center frame: Vaughn, left, Myers and Divers on Feb. 14 use brushes to interpret the photograph of the Horsehead Nebula. Right frame: Divers fans black cherry paint with her fingers Feb. 14

“The colors got dirty,” Ludwick explains Feb. 14, before the second class in which students would resume their painting and the first after they addressed their mistake. “They intermixed too much. That is part of the whole process. But that is why I was telling them initially about having to be very, very careful with black physically blending with the other colors. It has to pretty much just lie on top of a dry color.

“We had to go back in and we probably primed out a third of the painting. At that point I was wondering whether we were going to have to primer it all out and start all over again.”

Ludwick also introduces to them a photo torn from a calendar, that of the Horsehead Nebula.

“When I came back into the room, and the four panels were standing vertically, my first gut feeling was that the painting wasn’t dramatic enough,” he said. “It was too tame. I started looking for images from the galaxy. And then I found that one.”

Two hours into the painting, he says his students faced what he says was a decision to “cure or kill the patient. You either go the safe way and end up with mediocre, or you just go all in and you are either going to take it to another level or you are going to lose it.”

Using the Horsehead Nebula photo as inspiration, his students Feb. 14 took it to another level, adding stratus-cloud-like billows of varying black cherry densities that swirl around the periphery of the panels, patterns that defined the oranges, reds and yellows and clarified the energy, excitement and movement they sought – and, as Ludwick said, may make the creation “jump off the wall.”

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Baglier Mazda will announce the winner at an April 5 reception.

The class project on this scale was a first for Ludwick at BC3.

“I used to do it when I was an elementary art teacher,” he said, “but in my 20 years here, I don’t remember anything like this.”

He also learned himself that artists other than Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat can unite to create a singular piece.

“The students learned to work together,” Ludwick says. “To take their individual ideas and also my instruction and then try to get it to a piece that fills those needs and requirements at the end, and that they are all happy with. Artists are difficult. They are egotistical. They have strong ideas and convictions.”

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First frame: As the project nears its completion on Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2018, Myers adds an accent of black cherry paint onto the bottom of the first of four canvases. Center frame: Vaughn squeezes white paint toward the top of the first panel on Feb. 21. Right frame: Ludwick, left, Vaughn, Myers and Divers are shown Feb. 21 with the finished painting, one that took five hours to create and will be entered in a Baglier Mazda contest that begins March 1.

Ludwick was convinced his students “got their rhythm again” after repairing the fourth panel, introducing black cherry and the influence from the photo of the Horsehead Nebula.

“And it became a different painting,” Ludwick says Feb. 21. “And actually a better painting. What we have now I think is a better end result than what we would have had on the first stages had it gone too smoothly. The change to a dark background took it in a different direction. A different feel to it.”

As Divers and Myers, both of Karns City, Vaughn and Ludwick move to the front of Classroom 101 inside BC3’s Arts and Hospitality Building just after 10 a.m. Feb. 21, Analise Broadwater, a psychology student from Butler, examines the work and says she sees “Fire. A lot of energy. Heat energy.”

“It looks like a meteor,” adds Hanby, of New Kensington. “A fireball.”

“Like something in space,” says Brooke Wolfe, of Rural Valley. “Like a meteor.”

“It really does do a good job of conveying the energy,” adds Hannah Halahurich, of Butler.

“It looks like it is going right through,” says Smith, of Petrolia.

Vaughn, Divers and Myers stand silently near Ludwick, paint-covered fingers hidden within folded arms, eyes darting left to right across their series of four 24-inch by 48-inch canvas panels leaning against cabinetry 20 feet distant

“I think it’s done,” Ludwick says.

“I think we are good,” Divers says.

“I can’t wait to see what the others did,” Ludwick says, “because I have no idea how they interpreted it. They could be similar or they could be worlds apart.”

“I hope we win,” Vaughn says.

Adds Ludwick: “I hope we do too.”