

Expressions

FALL 2014

Promoting the creative power in people with disabilities.

New Works Added...

Creative Power: VSA Wisconsin's Traveling Exhibition

Ten new works have been added to *Creative Power: VSA Wisconsin's Traveling Exhibition* and are now bringing increased recognition to the extraordinary talents of artists with disabilities from across the state. The award winning works were selected by independent arts professionals from more than 225 submissions entered in the 2014 Call for Art. Dramatic, whimsical, sophisticated, and exotic are just a few words that describe the new works which include artists' creative expressions in acrylic, oil paint, pastels, ink and a variety of other mixed media.



Animals, Sam Brickman

The new artists represented in the exhibition include: Taryn Benthein, Valders; Alyssa Bell, Highbridge; Sean Iwinski, Milwaukee; Benjamin Clark, Cambria; Sam Brickman, Janesville; John-Dennis Ryder, Whitelaw; Jack Dillhunt, Green Bay; Jerome Glenn, Madison; Michaela Toth, Star Prairie and Sarah Bergstrom, Glendale.

The ideas and emotions expressed in the art are very powerful. A common theme among the artists . . . they love to create art for themselves and others to enjoy. Their work was inspired by other artists, heroes, pets, nature, imagination, historical figures and family.

Sam Brickman's pen and ink on canvas features 24 colorful animals separated by bold black lines. His work is detailed and delightful. Sam's keen observation and orderly visual interpretations demonstrate his use of space and also suggest relationships between the subjects. Autism presents many challenges for Sam, but through his work he finds a sense of serenity.

The Happenstance Interview by Jack Dillhunt is a photograph and digital drawing on canvas. The work began with a photo of his good friend Karen. The canvas photo accompanied Jack around his home studio, where he periodically stopped to draw on it freehand with a ballpoint pen. The results are captivating!

Another new work *No. 4* is an acrylic on canvas. Artist Michaela Toth says, "Artistic expression is my dear friend. When I ignore her, I feel empty and that is why I must create. Much like a husband and wife relationship, my living with a disability is a daily commitment. It is an acceptance of the good, the bad, and the confusing. Mornings are a time of battle and triumph. This piece is a work paying homage to that daily triumph: getting out of bed."



No. 4, Michaela Toth

Working together...

This newsletter is intended to keep our friends, donors and participants up to date on our activities. To our wonderful donors and sponsors, thank you for your support of programs that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. We appreciate all you do!

--The VSA Wisconsin Team

VSA

WISCONSIN

The State Organization
on Arts and Disability

& News Events

Art Exhibitions

Creative Power

30 award-winning works
from across the state

at
Childrens Museum
Madison
through Jan. 4

Can You Feel It?

works by artists with visual
impairments

at
VSA Wisconsin Gallery
Madison
through Feb. 13

Events

Beat the Winter Blues

at
VSA Wisconsin

Feb. 13, 2015
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Call for Entries

Call for Art

Deadline: Feb. 9
Application found @

http://vsawis.org/exhibitions_sales/call_for_art/cfabrochure-fyfy15.pdf

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Paint and Brushes...

Cook Up Success

VSA Wisconsin collaborated with the Northside Planning Council in Madison this summer to create an inviting outdoor gathering space at the FEED Kitchens, just across the parking lot from the VSA Art Center. Adults with a range of disabilities painted and embellished an accessible picnic table and several benches. The picnic table was built by women in the YWCA's Construct-U job training program and the benches were hand crafted by a local Boy Scout, Ian Murkve.

The process of making the art required teamwork, communication and problem solving among class members. The end result is outdoor furniture that is vibrant, engaging and available to all visitors to the Northgate Shopping Center who wish to take a moment to rest and savor the smells coming from the Kitchens.



Signing & Singing...

National Anthem

The VSA Choir - Wisconsin Rapids (left) performed the National Anthem at two Wisconsin Rapids Raptors baseball games this summer. The VSA Choir - Madison (right) sang the song and signed it in American Sign Language at a Madison Mallards baseball game on June 5.



Local Collaboration...

Nets International Award

VSA Wisconsin was recently recognized by the international VSA Affiliate Council with the 2014 Award for Excellence in Innovation in Programs for its collaboration with Forward Theater Company of Madison. This award recognizes an innovative program that is original, documentable, replicable, and ahead of its time.

VSA Wisconsin and Forward Theater Company joined forces this past winter to challenge perceptions and raise awareness about art and the creative process. The collaboration was inspired by Forward Theater's production of *Red*, the story of abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko.



The collaboration with Forward Theater inspired us to think outside the box. We challenged the teaching artists at the Art Center to plan their fall 2013 classes around the theme *What Is Art?* What followed were new ideas for individual and collaborative art making. Nora Currie, pictured left, is one of nearly 100 participants that benefitted from this collaboration. Selected works created in the classes were on view at VSA Wisconsin's gallery in the exhibition, "What is Art? A Showcase of Expressive Responses."

Red attendees were able to view some of the VSA Wisconsin projects in the Playhouse Theatre lobby at the Overture Center for the Arts and were invited to add their responses to "What is Art?" on a large canvas. Artistic Director, Jennifer Uphoff says, "Forward Theater Company is proud to have partnered with VSA Wisconsin, and congratulates them on winning the 2014 Award for Excellence in Innovation in Programs. This is the kind of outreach program that we strive to offer our audiences, and it was truly inspirational for us to see the creative works and artistic visions that resulted from this collaboration. We are thrilled that it benefitted such an incredible organization."

Your Donations In Action...

Art Center Classes Nurture Creative Expression



Pam (pictured above right) is an enthusiastic artist who enrolls regularly in classes at the VSA Art Center in Madison. This past spring, she and her fellow Photo Town classmates learned how to use a digital camera to capture images of the world around them, select the best photographs, and prepare them for a public exhibition. The teaching artist gave individualized instruction in photographic composition, lighting, print selection, matting and framing. Community volunteers with a passion for photography mentored each of the participants. Classes were held at Madison-area venues including the Overture Center for the Arts, Brittingham Boats and James Madison Park. A public exhibition of the photographs was on view at the Chocolaterian Café in Madison this summer.

Your contributions offer creative opportunities for Pam and hundreds of people with disabilities ages 16 and up who expand their skills during classes in music, creative movement and visual art at the Art Center.

The Power of Puppetry and Storytelling

Artist residencies in early childhood centers help young children with disabilities develop a range of skills. David* knew all of his colors and shapes and could express them in sign language, however, he was unable to use verbal language to communicate his needs and wants.

Last winter, an Early Childhood-Healthy Foundations artist residency at his Janesville-area preschool focused on storytelling through the use of puppets and children's literature. According to the classroom teacher, "the puppets really helped spark each child's creativity. I could see each child grow in confidence – in speaking up

and being part of the creative process. Through the puppets, children would add to the story, try other voices, and create dialogues with each other." Prior to the residency, David said only one or two words daily. By the end of the residency's ten sessions, David was saying many more words, sometimes up to twenty.



Donations from people like you make these outcomes possible. Your gift today supports programs and services that increase the quality of life for people with disabilities. Complete the donation form below or visit vsawis.org for secure online giving.

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The mission of VSA Wisconsin is to expand the capabilities, confidence and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities by providing programs in dance, drama, creative writing, music and visual art.

VSA Wisconsin is a member of the VSA affiliate network, a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This newsletter is made possible in part by: Advertisers Press and xpedx.

To receive this newsletter in an alternative format, contact VSA Wisconsin.



Chicks

The artwork above by Jack Bresnahan, a participant in a "VSA Yo Soy...Je Suis...I Am...My Neighborhood" artist residency in Wauwatosa, has been selected as one of this year's winning artworks in a national art competition. His work is currently featured in an exhibition at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. Congratulations to Jack on this honor!