

Meditation meets creativity at workshop tonight

By Layne Lakfish
Emerald Entertainment Editor

The workshop leader chooses meditation. Not to scare anyone or convert anyone or summon up strange beings. She does it to connect seemingly different worlds, and she succeeds.

Not only does she open minds and clear thoughts, but she pulls together the two worlds of art and spirituality. She shows participants that art can be a reflection of spirituality, and then she lets them create.

The workshop series, called "The Spirituality and the Arts Project," begins today and will continue on Oct. 9, 16 and 23. The workshop meetings will take place at the Wesley Foundation, 1236 Kincaid St., from 7 to 9 p.m. each night. Participants are encouraged to attend all meetings and admission is free.

Based on the theory that art and spirituality can go together, the workshops will educate participants on the history of art and spirituality and then allow them to create individual and group projects.

The workshops will be facilitated by Ardis Letey, a University graduate student in fine arts, who is doing a specialized ministry in arts and spirituality. She is also an active participant at the Wesley Foundation.

"Ardis has the wonderful ability of creating safe space so people can become in touch with their own spiritual journeys," said Janet Cromwell, Wesley Foundation director. "From that, they can then create pieces of artwork that reflect their spiritual journeys."

During the first workshop, which takes place tonight, Letey will give an introduction to the history of spirituality and arts, making use of slides, and then pull in meditation to relax the participants and get them in tune with their spirituality.

"She guides participants through a meditative process that will draw out a vision," Cromwell said.

Then, from that vision, they can create artwork that reflects their spiritual feelings and journeys.

The second workshop will continue where the first left off, with a bit more history and another chance to work on an individual project. The last two weeks will be spent working on a group project or projects.

"The exciting part and the scary part is that the group has a lot of power over what happens," Cromwell said. "There is a lot of freedom over what is created."

In the past, participants in a similar project created prayer banners with silhouette faces on them, Cromwell said.

"It was neat because they used light to make silhouettes of each of their faces, and then each one colored in their face according to how they were feeling," she said.

When the banner was completed, all the silhouettes looked unique and each represented something unto itself.

The result of projects such as this illustrate that art does and can reflect many things, one of which is spirituality. "This is an opportunity for students to understand their spiritual lives, get more in tune with their

spiritual lives, explore them, and see how art can enrich it," Cromwell said.

Due to increased interest, the same type of workshops will be conducted at both Oregon State University and Willamette University during winter term. Then, during spring term, the project will culminate with participants from all three schools coming together for a retreat at

Suttle Lake, near Sisters, Oregon.

"This will give participants the chance to get together and share what they've learned," Cromwell said. "They will have the opportunity to come together and share that energy again."

The workshops here have drawn considerable interest, both from Wesley Foundation

regulars and from students who have seen posters. "I'm amazed," Cromwell said. "We have gotten dozens of calls from people we don't even know."

Due to the high interest level, the Wesley Foundation asks that anyone who is interested contact them at 346-4694.

No prior religious or art background is required.

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