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The rec center commissioned William Park's energetic paintings of activities in accordance with the Percent for Public Art Program.

Rec center lifts interior mood with sports art

Portland artist William Park's oversized paintings brighten a recreation center corridor

Helen Schumacher
Pulse Reporter

Most people do not go to the gym expecting to see a fine art exhibit. However, regular visitors to the Student Recreation Center this term have probably noticed the exercise facility is playing host to several original paintings, which hang in the hallway between the lobby and locker rooms.

The works were installed as the final fulfillment of the state law requiring that 1 percent of the overall construction cost of a state-owned building be allocated to art for the building.

Other works created for the Percent for Public Art Program include the fountain outside the center's front entrance and the etched glass that separates the swimming pool from the lobby area.

Department of Physical Activity and Recreation Services director Dennis Munroe was part of the committee that decided which art pieces would be added to the rec center.

"Some moneys were left over in the fund after those first two pieces," Munroe said. "We determined as a committee that we wanted something in the hallway."

The Oregon Arts Commission sent out an announcement to Oregon artists, asking them to submit ideas for the space and slides of previous work.

Portland artist William Park applied for the contract.

"I don't apply to many public art projects, but this one appealed to me because of the kind of work I do," Park said.

After looking at all the submissions, the arts committee decided to ask Park to add his creative touch to the building.

Park spent most of last year working on the seven oversized oil paintings depicting activities including tennis, Tai Chi, rock climbing, soccer, swimming and running.

"The paintings are inspired by a

"The paintings are inspired by a particular activity or sport. I take a lot of expressive liberties and artistic licence with my paintings. You get the feel of Tai Chi rather than the literal depiction."

William Park
Artist

particular activity or sport," Park said. "I take a lot of expressive liberties and artistic license with my paintings. You get the feel of Tai Chi rather than the literal depiction."

Munroe said he is extremely happy with Park's work.

"I've heard multiple positive comments," Munroe said. "People stop me in the hallway and tell me how much they like them. The hallway used to be little more than a way to get from one place to another, and now people spend time there. The paintings add an element of invitation to stop and spend time. People now sit and read, do homework or chat."

University senior Christie Cruz said she exercises at the rec center four to six days a week and often walks past the artwork.

"It's a good representation of the athletic diversity here at the University," Cruz said. "I like the concept of the paintings."

Junior Lilee Hua also said she liked the variety of sports that were depicted.

"I like that the sports that the paintings are of, are not the popular sports like basketball and baseball," Hua said. "Instead they're of soccer and other sports. I like them. When I saw them I thought they were nice."

The paintings will be on display in the rec center indefinitely.

Contact the Pulse reporter at helenschumacher@dailymerald.com.

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