



Courtesy

The University will host an art show featuring work by University artist Richard Wilson Aug. 19-21.

University art major's show displays a range of talent

Richard Wilson's art provides unique takes on personal and social issues

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PULSE EDITOR

University art major Richard Wilson is currently working toward his master's degree. He has created art with found objects, digital production techniques and many other methods. He has had work shown in galleries across Oregon and will have a new show with many never-before-seen pieces here at the University on August 19. He recently spoke to the Emerald about his work and his life as an artist.

Emerald: Can you describe to me what the show is going to be like?

Richard Wilson: It's a collection of quite a few years' work from my years as a UO art major. There are two brand new pieces that I just finished, more installation pieces and larger pieces. The show will involve a lot of sculpture and 3-D work; also, a collection of computer and digital art that I've done over the past couple of years or so. The live portion of the show will be on August 21. There will be two dance pieces done by local dancers. There will be a performance piece, poetry, quite a few things. The actually live show will be at 7 p.m., so people will need to be there by 6 p.m. at the latest because at seven will be closing the doors due to the lighting. It's going to be a sort of surrealistic atmosphere, so we're turning down the lights and we'll have a fog machine going.

Emerald: How long have you been involved in art?

RW: I've been involved in art for probably close to 40 years. I had an art photography business at one time and then decided to close it. I'm hoping to get some job teaching a community college art course or something and earn enough money to support my habit.

Emerald: How did you get started on your habit?

RW: I grew up around artists. Kind of an unusual background. From when I was three months old we traveled around the United States, never stayed in one place more than three weeks at a time. We traveled in the circuses and carnivals, things like that, so I was around artists and show people and musicians. It was just my life from the

time I was born, so I just naturally gravitated toward that. My uncle is a professional artist and my dad was an artist before he died. I'm a musician; I write poetry and prose and the like.

Emerald: What sort of themes do you try to discuss in your work?

RW: My stuff almost always deals with social issues: Things to do with war, child molesting, hypocrisy in religion. A lot of satire and sarcasm you might say. A lot of the stuff I make is from junk I pick up out at Bring Recycling. A lot of my art is digging at the Establishment. I'm an ex-hippy, so I guess it's sort of my mentality. I see a lot of problems in the world, and you either go crazy or you find some way to cope with it. I use art as a way of addressing it.

Emerald: Are there any particular themes you address in this upcoming show?

RW: It's a conglomeration of a lot of things. The title of the show is "It's All a State of Mind." A big part of the show has a lot to do with an event I witnessed a long time ago. When I was 16, I saw a girl die in a car crash. The event sort of burned itself into my brain. The first piece I'm going to do is a piece of prose about that event and how everything around us is degrees of perception and how we view other people. Like how a person can have hatred toward another race because of what was taught them but how they can change that state of mind and become more open minded. It has a lot to do with how the mind works.

Emerald: What do you want people to take from this?

RW: Just, maybe, shock some people. Because we see so much, so much violence and so much hatred, its in the news and everywhere. I just want people to stop for a minute and think about the consequences. A lot of artists have done the same thing, it's nothing new, but how I choose to interpret it or how I choose to address it is unique because its my personal perspective rather than someone else's. A lot of my images are not comfortable to look at and will probably never sell.

Emerald: What kinds of artists do you respect or are influenced by?

RW: I could care less about a picture of a barn in a field. Like the Renaissance artists. I admire their determination and their integrity and their craft,

but that's as far as I'm interested in it. I'm interested in Jackson Pollock and others that broke the boundaries. The Dadaist, who spit in the face of the Establishment. People who were bold enough to stand up against what everyone thought art was, who risked their careers for what they believed in. A lot of my stuff is like what they did. Some people say my work is nothing new, but in a way it is, since it's addressing contemporary issues.

Emerald: No one is doing it today.

RW: Yeah, in fact we seem to be moving away from it. Here at the UO, about 90 percent of the art I see is pretty vague, you can't really put your finger on what they are trying to say. My kind of art might be considered by some to be old-fashioned or passé. I've studied a lot of art history and there was an era where artists protested with their art. They don't seem to be doing it that much now, but I don't really care. I like doing what I do. I'm not all that concerned with selling my stuff. If someone wants to buy it that's fine, but if I can shake somebody up a little bit or just someone pissed off...

Emerald: Are you involved with any other art organizations in Eugene?

RW: Well, I've shown in galleries all over the place, on the coast, in Coburg. I've entered stuff in the Mayor's Art Show every now and then. There's a gallery that likes to show my stuff. They told me they're probably not going to be able to sell it, but they just like to have it there because it makes people stop, look and think. There's one thing I do, I've kind of been keeping it a secret. I make these little human figures and leave them around town, on campus or in the mall. I didn't really want people to know who did it because I just wanted to put them there and see how people reacted to them.

Emerald: Are you working on any other projects?

RW: I'm trying to do more and more public art projects. I'm trying to get some art out on the islands in Alton Baker Park. I like the idea of getting things out that stop people in their tracks.

"It's All a State of Mind" opens on August 19 and will run through August 21. The show will be in room 290 of the Allied Arts and Architecture Building and will be open from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. every day.

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