

EOU artists find 'a point of connection' despite pandemic

LA GRANDE — Art Center East will host an exhibit featuring recent artwork made by Eastern Oregon University students with a major or minor in art.

The exhibit will be on display from April 2 through May 1. Featured artists include Sophia Aimone, Kimberly Baum, Dalton Mauzay, Jan Ng and Dillon van Rensburg. Art Center East exhibits are always free.

The annual EOU Junior Exhibition at Art Center East marks a significant step on the path of each student involved. While this group is cohesive in their shared academic experience, the variety of their artistic processes and distinct creative interests result in a group exhibition that celebrates individual expression.

As students enter this phase of their studies, their unique style and perspective begins to emerge, even in the midst of a global pandemic.

"This exhibit didn't happen in 2020 due to COVID-19 closures — the first of many that were canceled or postponed in order to keep our community safe," said Sarah West, Art Center East's community outreach coordinator, in a press release.

"Life in 2020 could be pretty bleak at times, and the abandonment of several ACE exhibits was one way that reality hit home for me."



Art Center East/Contributed Art

The 2021 EOU Junior Exhibit — "a point of connection" — is evidence that art always finds a way. The exhibit showcases work made during the pandemic, exploring themes of internal and external worlds.

Similarly, art making was significantly impacted by pandemic restrictions, especially for students who could no longer attend in-person instruction or access their campus studios.

But art always finds a way, and these young artists are a testament to that persistence.

Spanning themes such as childhood memories, relationships and real and imagined environments, all of the artists in this exhibit used their practice to explore points of connection between the interior experience and the outer world of interaction and physicality.

That art — the product of months in pivot and forced isolation — finally gets to step out into a shared space and be seen.

"After a year of stumbling around online trying to reimagine making art with digital tools or in isolation, I think we all realize the privilege of presenting creative work to the community," said Eastern Oregon University art professor, Susan Murrell.

"This group of students brought focus and physicality to their practices and we are so appreciative that others can experience it."

The 2021 EOU Junior Exhibition would not be possible without EOU's ongoing partnership and collaboration with Art Center East, according to the release, which continues to support artists at every stage of development and enrich Northeast Oregon's diverse arts community.

ABOUT ART CENTER EAST

Art Center East is located at 1006 Penn Ave. in La Grande. Regular gallery hours are Wednesday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Gallery admission is always free and open to the public. Exhibits can also be viewed online at www.artcentereast.org thanks to a partnership with John J Howard Real Estate.

Founded in 1977 as Eastern Oregon Regional Arts Council, Art Center East is a registered 501c3 not for profit arts services organization providing arts learning opportunities and experiences for rural schools in a 10-county service area in Eastern Oregon, as well as art classes, monthly art exhibits and cultural events in its historic Carnegie Library building in La Grande.

Art Center East also oversees the Community Ensemble music program, which hosts private music lessons for children and adults, the Community African Drumming group, and the Grande Ronde Community Choir. The Community Ensemble program is a partnership between Art Center East and Eastern Oregon University.

Art Center East programs are supported by its members and funded with donations and grants from local sponsors as well as regional and statewide foundations such as the Oregon Arts Commission and the Oregon Cultural Trust. For more information, visit www.artcentereast.org or call 541-624-2800.



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