

Burns measures, molds and casts the clay



Photo by Scott Johnson

The art center mural done by Ron Burns is available for public viewing. The idea for the mural was introduced in 1988 by Nancy Travers who thought that Burns would be good for the job.

by Angela Wilson
Editor-in-Chief

Suspended on the wall of the Art Center building is a representation of an art student sketched,

measured, molded and cast into clay by Clackamas art student Ron Burns.

Burns is a West Linn graduate who has been attending Clackamas for three years. He has been artistically inclined for as long as he can remember.

"In high school I took all art classes except for ceramics and

sculpture," Burns said. "I hated clay then. I still don't like it much.

"Drawing and painting, those are my good qualities," Burns continued.

Like many of us here Burns came to Clackamas because it's "affordable."

"Clackamas has given me a chance to do what I like to do and that's what I like about it," Burns said.

The mural at the Art Center started with a watercolor class Burns had taken from Nancy Travers in 1988. Travers had wanted someone to do something with the wall and decided from the work Burns had done in her class that he should do it.

"Nancy called me in the spring and asked me to do it," Burns said. "I sketched and drew it over the summer and started the work in the fall."

The first step Burns took in getting started on this project, that took 400 hours to complete, was to measure the wall. He then made a life-sized drawing of the mural. Burns spent fall term 1989 working on the rough draft of the project.

Burns spent winter term of 1989 working the clay and making the body of the figure. Burns used two full garbage cans or about 500 pounds of red clay on the mural. Dry and hanging on the wall it weighs about 250 pounds. The clay had to be laid out flat on chipboard and flattened out to be about an inch and a half thick. Then the

tiles were cut out of the clay.

"The tiles are not square; they had to be cut at an angle," Burns said. "It was like a big jigsaw puzzle, and once the tiles were done I had to fit them back together."

The figure was made in the same manner. The head, chest, face, neck, arms and legs were all done in separate pieces.

"The figure is hollow," Burns said. "It had to be a certain thickness otherwise the clay gets air bubbles in it and will explode."

"After I smoothed out the clay and had a basic figure I added the details like the shoe laces and shoe lace holes," Burns added.

"Clackamas has given me a chance to do what I like to do and that's what I like about it."

-Ron Burns

Spring term of 1989 Burns spent firing the pieces, painting the figure and hanging the mural on the wall. Yellow, red blue and black are the colors Burns used to paint the mural.

"I only had four colors to work with so some of them I mixed to get different effects," Burns said. "I first used a primer coat on the wall. I rolled it on and used a brush for the gaps in the wall, then using the same color paints, I painted over the primer coat."

"I used an air-compressor sprayer to paint the design on the wall around the mural. The air compressor worked real well," Burns said. "It did what I wanted it to do."

"Because the colors I used were so bright it led your eye away from the mural; the salmon color used leads it back in," Burns added.

After completing his schooling at Clackamas, Burns plans to attend Marylhurst College. He may get his teaching certificate someday and if so would like to teach art at the high school or community college level.

Burns admires the work of Leonardo DaVinci because "he is intricate in his ideas and his inventiveness and he took pride in his sketches and so do I."

"I also like Rembrandt because he is a terrific painter-- he knows his stuff," Burns added.

When asked about his talent and what he thinks of other peoples' work Burns said, "Art is something I've always known. I don't even look at other peoples' work much because to me it's competition and I just want to do my thing."

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