

# Artist brings Kentucky inspiration to campus

**Erin Carey**  
Arts & Culture Editor

There's something new in Niemeyer's Alexander Gallery, by the name of "Solitary Gestures."

In a series of works by sculptor Christopher B. Wagner, these pieces are living up to their title. They aren't massive works of granite and marble, but a different template — unique sculptures of reclaimed lumber, Douglas fir, milk paint (an environmentally friendly paint often used for antiques) and the most interesting of all, pig intestines.

"We had a great turnout to [Wagner's] reception, around 150 students and faculty," said Kate Simmons, Clackamas Community College's gallery director. "Multiple classes

heard Wagner speak, and students were very responsive."

"Solitary Gestures" aren't pieces that are meant to disturb those who are looking at them, but instead, introduce solidity. Walking through these pieces, there's a sense of loneliness — simple and worn away paint and long limbs stretching for something. Wagner used the simplest materials for pieces that seem simple themselves, but are decidedly more interesting.

Wagner youth in rural Kentucky inspired the materials he uses. "I grew up on a family farm, so we had an old barn as an out building on the farm that had since been replaced, but the old building was falling down," Wagner said. "So there were all these old big oak beams that I could have access to and cut them down."

He also found inspiration in

Kentucky's religious practices. "Most of my inspiration originated from my upbringing," he said. "I grew up on a farm in Kentucky, I grew up extremely conservative in a religious background and I didn't have much exposure to fine art growing up, so most of my influences have been rural and almost primitive in nature."

Furthering his use of materials that others would choose to throw away, Wagner also has a huge part in Glean, a project in Portland aiming to bring local artists and Metro, the regional government that helps run garbage collection and recycling in the area. Wagner emphasizes that he has a passion for using materials others wouldn't take a second look at, especially wood and paint. "I kind of fell in love with working with old materials, they had such a history and


character to them. I've bought new wood at times but I've always been disappointed by it, just because it didn't have the character," Wagner said. "Nothing is better than having an unexpected nail hole or knot in a piece of wood that you weren't planning for that you just have to work the piece around, and the character that the wood is already bringing to the piece."

"Solitary Gestures" is an exploration into the mind of a man that not only loves what he does, but creates art that many can relate to. He uses unique mediums for his work, and it shows by how much care he puts into creating each piece, the biggest one of the exhibit taking around 40 - 50 hours of work. More of Wagner's work can be found at the Guardino Gallery on Alberta St. in Portland, along

with CCC's Alexander Gallery open Jan. 13 to Feb. 6, Monday - Friday at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Emily Rask/The Clackamas Print




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