

Creative collaboration with 'Word & Image'

The second annual art exhibition at the Hoffman Center for the Arts opens Aug. 20

By DAN HAAG

Pablo Picasso noted that, "Every now and then one paints a picture that seems to have opened a door and serves as a stepping stone to other things."

That sentiment could apply to the Hoffman Center for the Arts' second annual "Word & Image" show, a creative collaboration between a wide variety of writers and artists.

The project — which began with a call for submissions in April — will culminate at a reception and presentation of the collaborative efforts at 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20.

The first iteration of "Word & Image" began in 2015 as a spin-off of the Hoffman Center's weekly Writer's Lounge. There, writers are invited to create short pieces in response to various prompts, whether they are a phrase, an image or an object.

"One day we were talking about writers responding to objects, and we thought how cool would it be to flip-flop that," says Emily Ransdell, co-organizer of the exhibition.

Ransdell, a prolific poet, handles the writer's side of the event. Painter and photographer Deborah DeWit, whose work can be found in Whitebird Gallery in Cannon Beach, is in charge of organizing the artists.

The basis for the project boils down to the Greek word "ekphrastic," defined as an often dramatic, verbal description of a visual work of art.

"It is a time-honored writing tradition," Ransdell says, pointing to "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by English

FALL BACK

By Emily Ransdell

Our long sleep wakes us hungry,
yet we linger skin to skin, saying
it is early still. Our bodies like petals
opened by sunlight, familiar flower,
velvet palm and thigh.

You had worked all day
to ready our garden for winter,
staking the honey locust, shoring up
the hydrangea, its shoulders stooped
with sodden bloom. Before bed
we had turned back the clocks
and closed the house against wind.

Now we rise and look down
at the Rose of Sharon which has let go
its leaves, each golden wing has flown.

The "Word & Image" show tasks writers and artists with responding to each other's work. Last year, Emily Ransdell provided the poem "Fall Back," and artist Deborah DeWit generated the painting "Time Change" in response.

poet John Keats as a prime example.

The idea proved to be a hit, and 2015 saw 15 submissions.

"We tried to pare it down to 10 this year but ended up with 12," Ransdell says. "We wanted to make sure everyone got enough time to be represented."

Entries are done via a blind submission process. Artists and writers each submitted three pieces of their previous work during the month of April. Then, in June,

they were randomly paired; Ransdell says the names were literally drawn from a hat.

Next, the artist was given their writer's three pieces, and the writer was given their artist's three images.

The artist chooses one of their writer's pieces and creates a new art piece inspired by that writing, while the writer selects one of their artist's images and writes something original in response.

Unlike a more typical themed show, the concept of



TIME CHANGE — Deborah DeWit

SUBMITTED PHOTO

response art and writing enables each participant to both showcase their own personal style and to connect with others through interpreting one another's work.

The show puts no restrictions on what type of artists can participate, and Ransdell says the mediums run the gamut from painters to dimensional paper design to sculpture. It's up to each pair to decide how to proceed with the creative process, the only caveat being that all

participants must have some connection to the coast.

"Some of them choose to meet up and discuss their projects; others don't meet at all," she says. "We call it 'silent collaboration.'"

Ransdell recalls the poem she wrote for last year's pilot show; she wrote it in response to a painting of blackbirds in low grass created by DeWit. Nervous at first, Ransdell says the more she worked on it, the more eager she was to share it with others.

'WORD & IMAGE' OPENING

7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20

Hoffman Center for the Arts

594 Laneda Ave.,
Manzanita

hoffmanblog.org

Free

"It's the excitement of an artist having their work interpreted by someone else," she says, adding that it also helps both writer and artist experience other mediums and stretch creatively.

At the reception event, the artists and writers will unveil their work: The writer will read his or her work while an image of their paired artist's creation is projected onto a screen. The artist, in turn, will speak about their creations. Paired works will be displayed side by side on broadsides, as well as the original art pieces. A book of this summer's whole collection of paired works will also be for sale.

"We are so impressed by the level of work," Ransdell says.

As the event draws closer, Ransdell says that she feels "Word & Image" will only continue to grow and inspire in the coming years.

"There's some kind of magic that happens with this," she says. "The stuff ends up working so well together, you couldn't plan it any better."