

# Artists work to expand students imaginations



"In the Park" performed by Heppner students at the close of McIntosh's residency. "Makeup erases the visual

identity, makes a blank slate so you can become anything. It emphasizes and simplifies expressions for greater recognition," McIntosh said.



McIntosh "loosens up" Heppner seventh graders for improvisations by having them "do what the sound tells them."

It's O.K. to do something original, to have ideas that are not a copy of everyone else's, he said. It's O.K. to get silly—many ideas come from being silly because it's new and exciting.

We have become a structured and traditional society. We need to remember that originality is as important as conformity.

"It's O.K. to be spontaneous," says mime, director, and actor Craig McIntosh of Boardman who has just completed a two-week residency at Heppner Elementary School. "Improvisation gives kids a creative, not a destructive way to act out impulses."

I'm not training all kids to become actors, he said. The idea is to give a range of activities for a different mode of expressions, the non-verbal which also impacts the verbal.

His goal with each residency is to loosen up the students so they can find a way of expressing themselves—whether through music, drawing, science, not just acting. If they can say they had fun, maybe they will try something a little different with an art or science project.

It's a chance for the students to get up and move around. "I give them things they can do after I'm gone. I want them to realize they can continue doing these things by themselves and with their friends," he said.

Originally from Illinois, McIntosh studied mime at Lewis and Clark College. He attended graduate school at the University of California at Irvine and directed an improvisational theatre troupe at Flagstaff, Arizona, and worked in an Alaskan repertoire theatre. He has performed a one-man show sporadically over the years.

He began with the artist in residence program in 1984 and will do two more this year at Condon and at Echo. Currently, he is a full time house-husband. He and his wife, Debbie, a school psychologist, have two children ages six years and 18 months. "When our oldest child was born, we began taking turns while Debbie stayed home, I worked, and now it's my turn to stay home with the kids while she works, he explained.

"It's very important to me," he said. "I would balk at the idea of not sharing time with the kids; it's been a tremendous experience."

The residencies provide McIntosh an opportunity to be in touch with his work and still fulfill his responsibilities at home.

School is a natural environment for me because both my parents are teachers, he said. It's neat to be able to share what I know with kids. It's different than performing for my own acclaim. I did a residency two years ago in Hermiston and the kids still know me. That's a good feeling, he said.

Many kids are stiff and inhibited when they first come in. I structure the class to increase activity so by the end of the first day they are beginning to look forward to coming back.

I try to tap into the creative which is sometimes stifled by the structure of school. Kids need both, an understanding of logic and rules, but creativity is natural.

Improvisational acting is performing without a script, making up the stories as you go along. "It's the most exciting form of performing," he said "because the actor is challenged to create while the audience watches what is produced."

Pantomime is familiar to kids also because every kid has pretended to be a superhero or somebody he's not. They automatically tune in from the beginning of a performance. Style and adding certain movements makes the character clear on stage.

## 5th in Family Focus series Sun., Mar. 1

The 5th of the Dr. James C. Dobson Focus on the Family film series will be shown Sunday, March 1st at the Heppner Episcopal Church at 4:30 p.m. Dr. Dobson states that strong, tightly knit families don't just happen. They are grown with love, care and understanding. Dr. Dobson helps you better understand yourself and your family by combining sound biblical wisdom with helpful psychological insights. He is recognized as one of America's foremost authorities on the family. These films are for parents, grandparents, teachers and all who want the best for their families.

The title of the film is "Preparing Your Child for Adolescence". There is no charge and the films last about 45 minutes. Baby sitting is provided.

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Sandy Brooke explains to intent students that the brush is made to go back and forth. "If it mashes together, you're using it the wrong direction," she said.

The product is a record of the moment when the artist saw something in a particular way. Good art creates the feeling the artist had at that moment in those who view it, she said. "I think that's why people pay a lot of money for good art, because it brings a vision they have had into their home. It gives them a lift and makes their life better."

Art is not the product. It is to imagine; it is a process which comes from the person. Good art creates the feeling the artist had at the moment it was created in those who view it. "I think that's why people pay a lot of money for good art, because it brings a vision they have had into their home. It gives them a lift and makes their life better," said artist Sandy Brooke.

Elementary students at Lone heard this and other insights from artist Brooke, 39, Sisters, during a two week teaching residency there.

Brooke has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and drawing from the University of Oregon. She works with oil and acrylics on paper and canvas painting mostly abstract landscapes. Currently her work is on exhibit at The Laurence Gallery at Salishan, with a traveling University of Oregon exhibit, and at a joint Eastern Oregon Regional Arts Council-Eastern Oregon State College show at LaGrande.

She did a two-week residency two years ago at Heppner Elementary School—the four-part mural students created under her direction hangs in the multi-purpose room. She has done several other residencies in eastern, central, and southern

Oregon since her early teaching experiences in Portland.

Art is learned by doing, Brooke emphasizes. We talk about it then sit and do it over and over again. Drawing develops hand-eye coordination which improves reading ability, she said. Little kids who learn to draw will read faster and improve their grades.

Drawing also improves the ability to see. "Everytime you look at something, you learn more about it. For example, a tree that you see everyday may appear brown, but when you look at it, the bark may be rubbed off and whitish. The more you practice, the better you get," she said.

Creativity, she continued, is the ability to take something your eyes have seen, internalize it, and then take that information and put it on paper.

Art can bring a sense of satisfaction because it provides an opportunity to express things that are inside the brain, that there is no other place to express, she said.

This is why art is so important to a well-rounded curriculum. Kids are curious and want to work. As a teacher, I give them a problem, teach them a technique, and they give the answer. Techniques she has taught at Lone are line drawings, charcoal, pastels, and tempera paints.

"I never have a final product in mind because art encourages individual differences; it offers a wonderful opening to stretch the imagination. It develops thinking patterns which carry over to life questions—those who think creatively survive."

## St. Pat's committee to meet March 6

The Heppner St. Patrick's Day committee will meet Friday, March 6 at 12 noon at Charlie's Pizza in Heppner.

Since this is the last meeting of the group before St. Patrick's Day Celebration it is important that all persons involved attend.

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