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'Eden'-like exhibit transforms art gallery

By Ashlie Crosson
Online Editor

The Lore A. Degenstein Gallery is being transformed from floor to ceiling for its latest exhibition featuring the work of Frank Hyder.

The exhibit will open tomorrow evening at 7. with a lecture from the artist and refreshments in the gallery to follow.

According to the gallery's Web site, Hyder's mixed-media collection, "Poems of a Lost Eden," covers the walls and floors, "creat[ing] a New Eden-like experience for the visitor while raising awareness of how this Eden is being threatened by the actions of the industrial world.

"Using mixed media elements, Hyder's installations create a magical environment of painting, sculpture, sound and light, transferring the viewer through a sensory experience," according to the gallery Web site.

"This exhibit is unique in that the entire gallery becomes a part of the artwork," senior gallery worker Carrie Olini said. "The very back of the gallery is transformed into a forest, with the walls covered in huge painted canvas and the floor spray-painted with an original Frank Hyder painting.

"It is not very often that you feel like you are walking into a painting instead of just looking at one," Olini added.

Hyder is currently a professor at Moore College in Philadelphia.

In 2001, Hyder was named the Senior Fulbright to Venezuela by the U.S. Embassy Cultural Grant.

Hyder said he gets his inspiration for his works from his time spent living in Venezuela, where he studied his various surroundings,

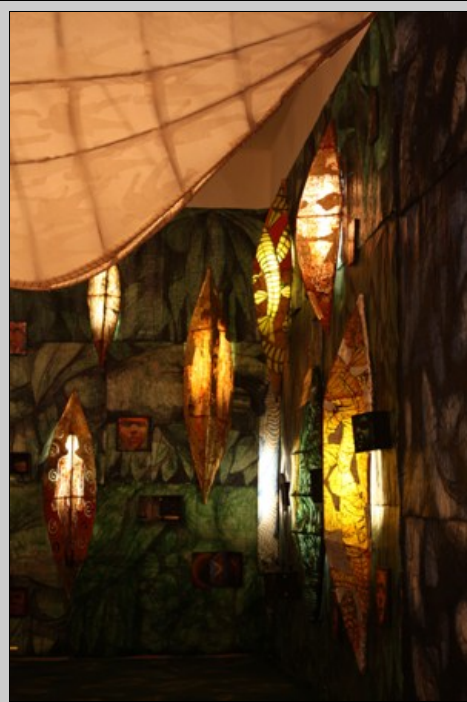
such as the rainforests, and took in the culture, the history and the indigenous tribes of the area.

"The natives already had a government, a system of culture, and it was all erased by the Europeans," Hyder said.

This union and tension between the different worlds is explored through Hyder's works. As part of this story, Hyder is displaying 100 black and white portraits painted from photographs of Amazon Indians, which have never before been included in his shows.

"I'm trying to give you a sense of the individual," he said. "Inside each person exists the future and the past generation."

In addition, the exhibit includes "poem paintings" featuring translated verses of poetry as documented by conquistadors; three-dimensional works that can be "touched, opened and manipulated;" "illuminaries," which are shields lit from behind; and three immense ships that hang from the ceiling.



Courtesy of The Crusader/Abbi Mull

3-d- The exhibit includes Frank Hyder's works called "illuminaries" which are shields lit from behind, and three ships hanging from the ceiling.



Courtesy of The Crusader/Abbi Mull

one hundred faces- The Lore A. Degenstein Gallery features "Poems of a Lost Eden," by artist Frank Hyder. Hyder's 100 black and white portraits painted of Amazon Indians is on display.

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"I'm not making a specific narrative; it's a poetic form. It's very much about light and touch and sound," Hyder said.

Creating an exhibit of this size and design has taken extra work from all those involved, including the artist himself. Hyder spent two days working with the gallery staff to ensure that the exhibit came together as well as possible.

Senior gallery worker Callie Klinger said: "This exhibit requires the most rigorous installation that I've been part of. This is the first exhibit I've helped with that the artist came to the gallery for installation.

"It's definitely a vital aspect of Frank's creative intent," Klinger continued. "The gallery staff is helping Frank create his alternative world, [and] the whole atmosphere of Lore A. Degenstein Gallery is being transformed."

"It's not like anything [the community] has ever seen [at the gallery]," gallery director Daniel Olivetti said.

"It's multi-media. He uses special carving tools, sounds, smell and ambient light," Olivetti added.

"These are from his personal collection," Olivetti said. "My students and I went through and made a wish list. He pretty much gave us what we wanted."

Many of Hyder's exhibitions center around this same general theme, but each is different from the previous. Hyder said he has never recreated the same showcase twice.

"Part of it is continual, but there are other pieces that I've never shown before. Some I pick up, some I leave behind. In that way, it's a real journey," Hyder said.

Hyder's earliest work featured in the collection is "Dreams and Memories," which he completed in 1987. The work, Hyder said, reflects his roots in woodcutting and paintings, as do many of the rest of the pieces, which have been carved, painted, lacquered and collaged to convey his messages.

Hyder's most recent exhibitions in 2008 include "The Persistent Dream" at the National Museum of Catholic Art and History in New York and "God, Man and Nature" at the Mason Murer Gallery in Atlanta.

In the "Eden" section of the gallery, the wall paintings incorporate real leaves from the rainforest.

Hyder said he wanted "to feel as if [he] was painting on the actual rainforest floor".

"When I first saw Frank Hyder's work I was impressed by his use of color and form," senior gallery worker Jonathan Stelman said.

"Now, after having seen it in person, I am awed by his use of texture. His work really engages all of the senses in a way that isn't annoying or trite," Stelman added.

Olivetti explained that Hyder's collection goes along with the unofficial gallery theme for this year, which is the exploration of the relationship between the modern and the natural.

"It is examining how the industrialized world is threatening nature," Olivetti said.

"The world is in jeopardy unless we change our energies and redirect our ways," Hyder said.

"I bring myself to make this statement about ourselves and those who came before us. It tells tales of the time we're in now, of hope and solutions," Hyder added.

"I think it's a dialogue that has been ongoing for literally 500 years; I'm trying to make my contribution."

"Poems of a Lost Eden" is the gallery's spring exhibit and will be on display until May 16.

The gallery is open Monday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m. The gallery is free and open to the public.

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