

ISSUE

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DOODLER'S SPIRIT

PAGE 8

INSIDE:
ORGANISMS,
TAOS RUSSIANS,
MEDIEVAL BOOKS,
AND MORE

Illuminating Books

FROM SKINS TO CODEX, MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS TOOK TIME, SKILL TO PRODUCE

Story by
Amelia Wiggins

Photos by
Allison Evans

“WHAT WOULD YOU USE to write on if you lived 600 years ago in Medieval Europe, where you didn’t have paper?” I ask my students, visiting the Stark Museum of Art on a field trip where they will see manuscripts from the Middle Ages. They puzzle together in silence for several long moments before the room echoes with guesses: “Tree bark! Leaves!” — and then, the winning guess from the child of a hunter: “Animal skin?”

Parchment, I explain, is the skin of a cow, sheep, or goat used for pages of medieval books. I pass around a few scraps of vellum, the skin of a calf, and as they rubbed its flexible, durable surface and breathe in its barnyard scent, I begin my story of how sheets like these were transformed into some of the most beautiful books in the world.

Before paper made its debut in Europe, any words worth preserving were written on parchment. The process of preparing vellum was long and laborious. In the late Middle Ages, urban centers had parchment specialists who transformed animal skins into surfaces suit-

able for writing. While still fresh, the pelt was soaked for days in water and lime to loosen the hair or fur, which was then be pulled out or rubbed off. This process also helped wash away some of the fat or grease. Once cleaned, the skin was stretched taut on a frame and scraped with a moon-shaped knife called a lunellarium. The rounded blade of this knife applied even pressure and ensured that the edge would not cut through the skin. The parchmenter scraped the skin until it was thin and regular. Especially fatty skins were treated with ash and lime before being dried. Finally, the surface was pounced, or rubbed with powdered pumice, chalk, or rosin to prepare it for ink.

The parchment was cut into even rectangles and sold, often in one of three standard sizes, to be used as the pages of a manuscript. It was not unusual for a large book to require over 100 animal skins.

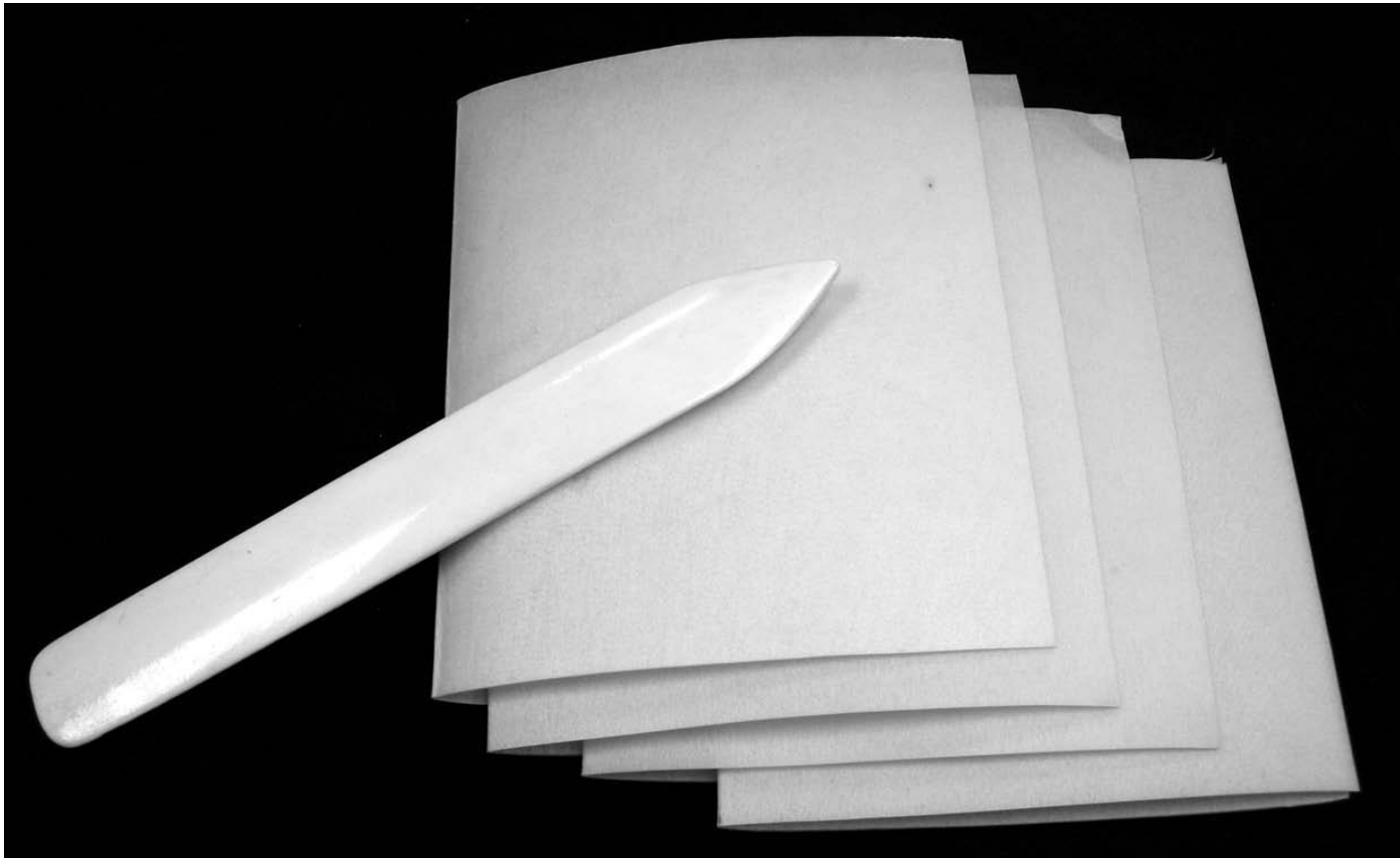
Cut parchment pages next went to the scribe, the artisan whose job it was to write the text of the book. The scribe was not the author; rather, his job was to copy words from a previous text. In the early Middle Ages, monks working in monasteries served as scribes. As the Middle Ages progressed, however, it became increasingly common for secular professionals to

assume this job, copying text by hand in return for pay. Before he wrote the text, the scribe ruled the pages with a knife or metal stylus. The design of the page was decided early in the process so the scribe could leave room for where decorations and illustrations would be painted.

Elaborate manuscript pages were divided into several elements. The main illustration, or miniature, was the largest image. A large capital letter, or decorative initial, often started the text. The borders are usually decorated as well. Each of these sections was planned at the very beginning and the scribe would have left room for their contents.

Our modern writing tools weren’t available in the Middle Ages, although medieval artisans occasionally used graphite for sketching. To write the text, the scribe used a quill pen made from a goose or swan feather hardened in hot sand. The pith of the feather was removed and the end was cut to form the writing nib, which held ink and drew it down to the tip. The nib of the quill was cut at a different angle depending on whether the scribe wanted to write with a rounded or angular script.

Medieval scribes made their ink by hand. One of



the most common, called iron-gall ink, was created from oak galls. Galls are growths on an oak tree created when an insect lays eggs on its bark. The tree surrounds the eggs to protect itself, and eventually the insects hatch, bore a hole in the gall and fly out. This natural material is rich in tannic acid, which made an ink that darkened over time and was permanent.

The scribe wrote each letter of each word out by hand, erasing mistakes by scraping off a thin layer of parchment in a small area with a knife.

When his task was complete, the pages went to the illuminator, whose job it was to illuminate, or “light up,” the parchment with golden and brightly colored illustrations. By the mid-15th century, the book trade was highly organized and employed a large number of people, including women. Many illuminators were fairly wealthy, especially those who worked for rich or royal patrons.

The tasks of manuscript making were increasingly specialized, and a large number of craftspeople might work on a single book, which could take years to complete.

Frequently, illuminators employed apprentices who worked on lesser illustrations in the book, and sometimes several artists would collaborate in a workshop setting to produce illuminations. The junior artists learned by executing the borders or lesser initials, and the important miniatures were saved for the master.

The illuminator first outlined the image in ink. For luxury books, gold leaf was used to light up the pages. The patron would decide upon this expensive material in advance. Gold coins were hammered into thin foil sheets, which were then stacked between protective slips of parchment and gradually beaten thinner and thinner until seemingly lighter than air. To adhere the leaf to the page, the illuminator used homemade glue made from sap mixed with plaster, to give it bulk, and honey, to keep it moist while he was working, and a little red clay for color. This adhesive was painted onto the parchment page. The illuminator breathed on the glue to moisten it and then delicately lay down a sheet of gold leaf. The leaf only stuck to the moist glue, and the leftover leaf was brushed away from the page.

The final step after the glue had dried was to burnish the gold with a smooth tooth or polished stone until it shone. It was important for the gold leaf to be applied before the color because otherwise the burnishing might scratch the paint off the page.

Paints were created by hand from ground minerals, natural dyes from plants, insects, and chemically produced colors. Most of the organic materials used for paint were broken up with a mortar and pestle, crushed into pigment, and then further ground with a little water in paste form until finely powdered. Usually, dry pigment would

be mixed with either beaten egg whites, known as glair, or with a tree sap called gum arabic to form liquid paint.

When frothy glair was used, medieval painters added a bit of earwax to break up the bubbles, a fact that fascinates the middle school boys who visit the museum.

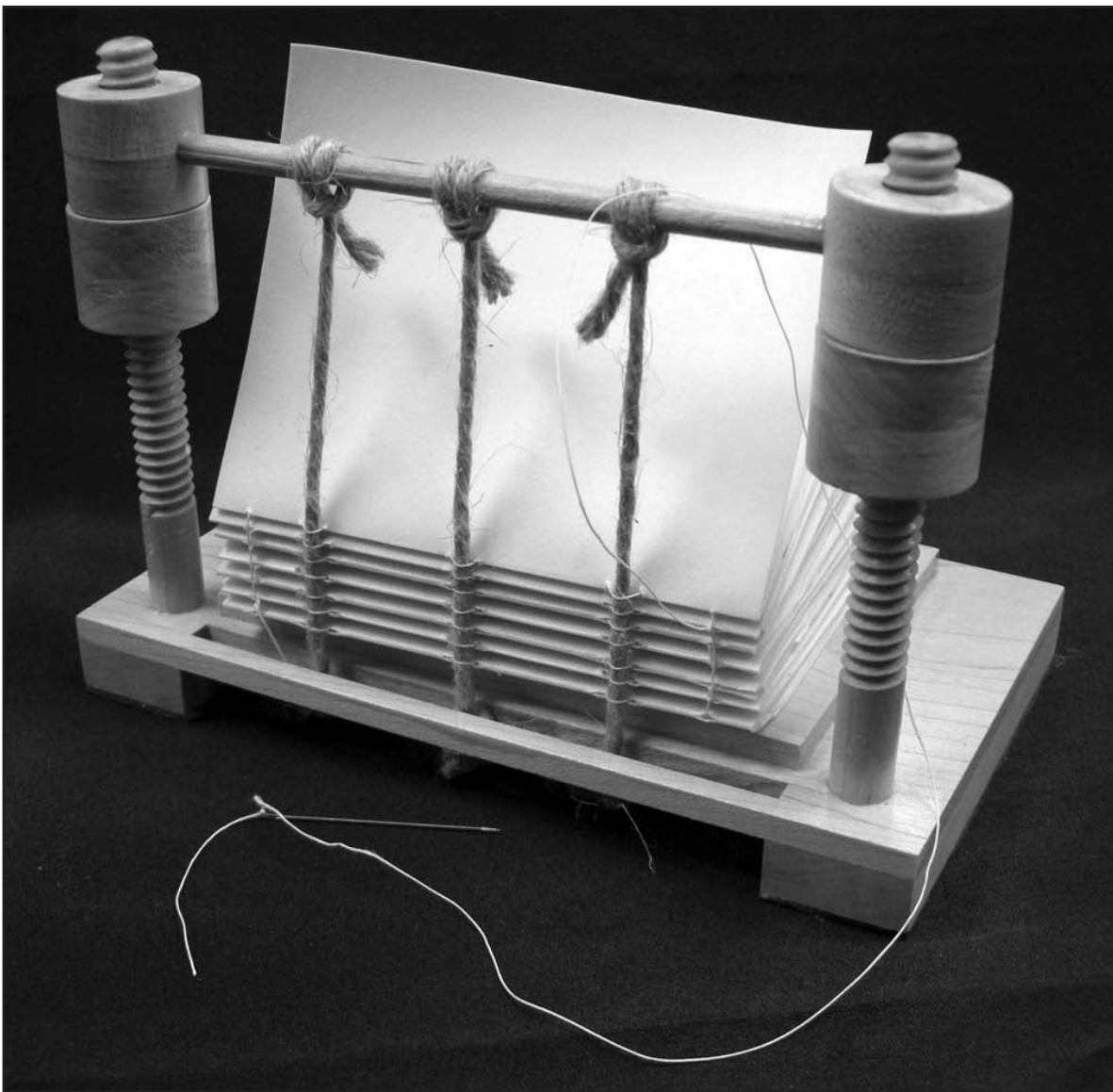
Every color of paint required a slightly different method of creation. Part of the medieval painter’s craft was knowing how much grinding each pigment required, which material to use for each color of the rainbow, and which additives could best bring out those colors.

Medieval paintmaking was often a dangerous task. White paint was made from white lead, created through a process that often poisoned its producers. Lead was also an important source of red. In fact, the latin word for red lead, minium, is where the word for the illustration of a manuscript, the miniature comes from. It was only later that miniature took on the meaning of “small” that we have for it today, and this was because of the small size of the illustrations the word first described. Mercury and sulfur mixed and beaten together produced another red, known as vermillion. The roots of the madder plant contain the substance alizarine. Insects, like the dried beetles I show my curious students, were also used to make red.

Green paints were created from a variety of sources. Malachite, a mineral, was used to make a pale, crystalline pigment. Olive greens were made from terre verte, a mineral deposit from the rocks of Northern Italy. Verdigris was an ancient source of green, made by treating copper with vinegar. This paint source was incompatible with white lead and had to be lightened with ground eggshells or powdered bone instead.

Gold leaf was often used in place of

This gathering of vellum pages with bone folder, top, and a quill pen are part of an exhibition of medieval manuscripts at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange through Feb. 25.



Follower of Bedford Master
SAINT MARK
Book of Hours, Use of Paris
c. 1410-1415, paint, gold and ink on vellum
Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas, 11.99.1

A codex on a sewing frame.

See BOOK on page 14

Two Russians in the American Southwest

*Over the rounded sides of the Rockies, the aspens of autumn,
The aspens of autumn,
Like yellow hair of a tigress brindled with pines.
Down on my hearth-rug of desert, sage of mesa,
An ash-grey pelt
Of wolf all hairy and level, a wolf's wild pelt.*

— D.H. Lawrence, “Autumn in Taos”

**Story by
Elena
Ivanova**

NESTLED AT THE FOOT of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the picturesque town of Taos, New Mexico, was a Mecca for artists and writers in the 1920s. Its breath-taking views, unique light and a fascinating mix of Hispanic and American Indian cultures had attracted creative people since the end of the 19th

century. However, most of them preferred to come for a season and then return to their residences at established art centers on the east coast or in the Midwest. It was not until the decade after World War I that the town became the locale of a formidable arts community, which included newcomers from far-away lands, such as Englishmen D. H. Lawrence and John Young-Hunter as well as Russians Nicolai Fechin and Leon Gaspard.

The two Russian artists could not



Nicolai Fechin (1881-1955), **JOE WITH DRUM**, undated
Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches
Stark Museum of Art, 31.38.13



Leon Gaspard (1882-1964), **TO THE CHRISTMAS FIESTA**, 1953-1956,
gouache on paper mounted to paperboard, 24 1/4 x 36 inches, Stark Museum of Art, 31.26.6

have been more different from each other — in personality, background, artistic sensibilities and the way their life in Taos unfolded.

Nicolai Fechin (1881-1955) was a reticent man, for whom his art and family, wife Alexandra and daughter Eya, were the center of his universe. He painted in a variety of genres; however, an important part of his body of work is represented by portraits. His images reveal a profound interest in the sitter’s character which he studied with the intensity of a psychologist probing into the depth of the human soul. His canvases bear a mark of his own emotional nature, which was hidden from the eyes of outsiders. They typically are interspersed with broad strokes of clashing, bright colors energetically applied with a palette knife, which he preferred to a more common brush. His art is a storm that enraptures the viewer by its beauty and drama.

At the time of his arrival in Taos, Fechin was a renowned artist of national and international reputation. He studied at the most prestigious art school in Russia, St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts, under famous artist Ilya Repin. After his graduation in 1909 and a period of European travel, he enjoyed an illustrious career as a portraitist and also taught at the art school in his native city of Kazan on the Volga River. His works were shown in numerous exhibitions in Russia and in other countries, including the United States. Finding himself unable to adjust to a new way of life in post-revolutionary Russia, Fechin emigrated to the United States coming first to New York and then relocating to Taos in 1927.

In contrast to soft-spoken, introverted Fechin, Leon Gaspard (1882-1964) was an outgoing person, an engaging story-teller and a world traveler with an avid interest in exotic cultures. In the early 1910s and early 1920s, he extensively traveled in Central and Eastern Asia — in Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet and China. In his vibrant, impressionistic paintings he recorded traditions and everyday life of these nations that were virtually unknown to European and American audiences. The stories of his adventures in those wild and mysterious parts of the world were natural extensions of his paintings and, most likely, both contained a large element of fiction. His friends in Taos may have had their doubts about the trustworthiness of Gaspard’s stories, but who could possibly argue whether or not the artist was captured by a group of Mongolian bandits and released only because he managed to impress their leader by painting his extremely life-like portrait?

One art critic called Gaspard “Munchausen,” albeit jokingly and in the context of a highly positive article about his work. This critic could not imagine how true his comparison was when it comes to Gaspard’s biography. Unlike Fechin, artist Leon Gaspard is unknown in Russia. It is logical to suggest that the reason was his departure, at the age of 19, for Paris, where he lived for 14 years prior to World War I, and his subsequent emigration to the United States. However, a research into his past revealed additional facts why there is no

See TAOS on page 11

‘Pretty’ Repulsive

ARTIST FINDS BEAUTY IN MOLDIER ASPECTS OF NATURE

**Story by
Andy
Coughlan**

THE DISCOVERY OF MOLD is not something one usually enjoys. Like reaching into the back of the fridge to find that old cup of soup that you put there fully intending to have the next day, only to find, several weeks later, that it has evolved into, well, something quite disgusting.

Jasmyne Graybill wants to change our perceptions of mold, as well as fungi, lichens and other natural organisms.

“I’m really interested in this idea of adaptation,” she says. “I am interested in this ambivalent relationship that we have with nature. On the one hand we vilify it. On the other hand we put it on a pedestal and we idealize nature — we think it’s this grand, wonderful thing — until there’s mold growing in the refrigerator or until the sugar ants get into the kitchen. Or until shelf mushrooms grow on the trees and it costs the lumber industry millions of dollars.

“It’s this idea of nature being something we both love and hate.”

Graybill says she is interested in

nature’s adaptive abilities and how it continues regardless of what we have to say about it.

“So we go and claim land and we clean it up, we have manicured yards, we have nice homes — but nature has a way of infiltrating back into those spaces and reclaiming what we have taken from it,” she says. “I see this especially on the coast. Anything that touches salt water will eventually get barnacles all over it. You see boat motors that have been in the water for any length of time encrusted with barnacles. It’s a very unnatural place for a barnacle to be.

“So it’s this idea of these objects influencing the evolution of nature. How does (nature) adapt to those spaces or objects or architecture, and how does that change their characteristics.”

She transforms the “icky” to “pretty,” and the product of those transformations are on display at Lamar’s Dishman Art Museum through Feb. 23.

“Home Sweet Home: Works by Jasmyne Graybill” features plates, cake pans and other ordinary objects Graybill has found in garage sales or discount stores. On each of these objects, she grows molds, fungus or lichen — or at

least, brightly-colored representations of these organisms.

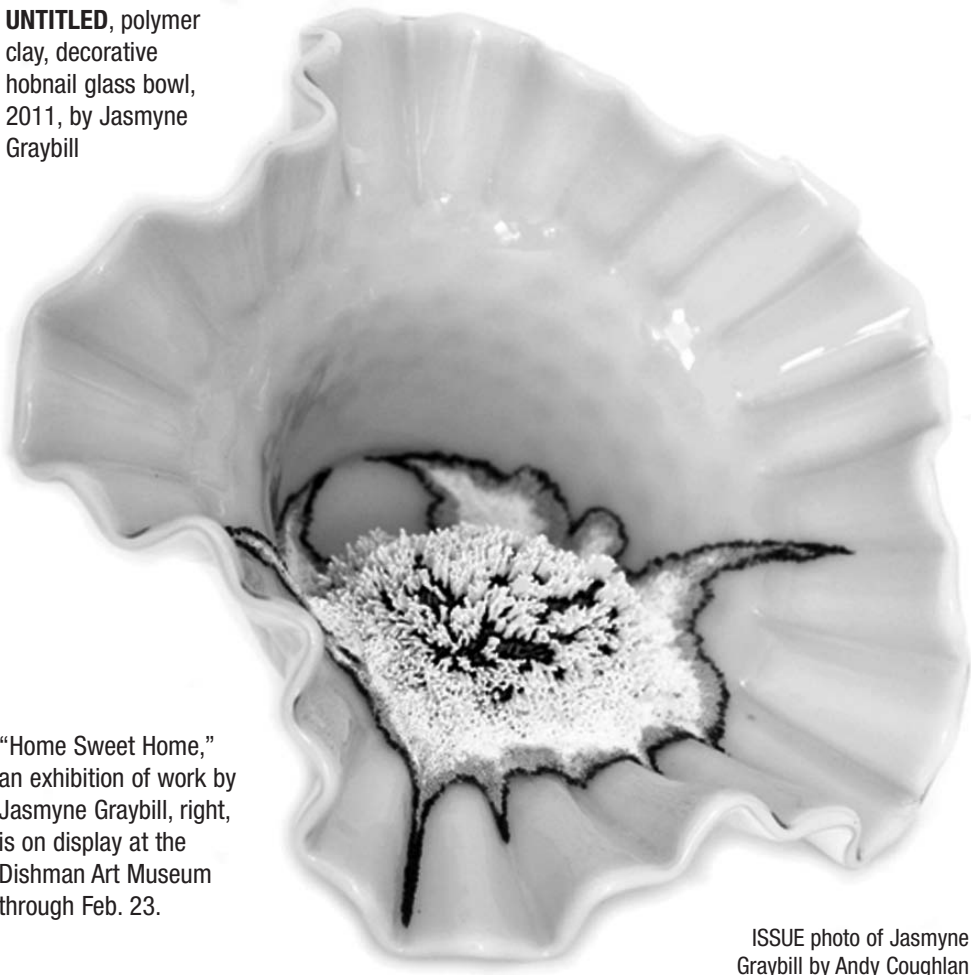
“The dollar store is my friend,” she says.

“Pretty” is word that one tries to

avoid in speaking about fine art — it often connotes something that is all surface

See MOLD on page 10

UNTITLED, polymer clay, decorative hobnail glass bowl, 2011, by Jasmyne Graybill



“Home Sweet Home,” an exhibition of work by Jasmyne Graybill, right, is on display at the Dishman Art Museum through Feb. 23.

ISSUE photo of Jasmyne Graybill by Andy Coughlan



RETURN OF THE DOODLER



ARREDONDO EXPLORES ‘CRIADOR ANIMA’ AT TASI IN FEBRUARY

Story and
photos by
Andy
Coughlan

ARTISTS MAKE ART. AND when artists make art, good things happen. Marty Arredondo never stops making art, so when the exhibition scheduled for February at The Studio fell through, Arredondo was a logical choice to fill the gap at short notice.

His brightly-colored paintings are a fixture in the local arts scene, but this is his first show at TASI since “Criador Anima” in 1994.

This show, which opens Feb. 4 and runs through Feb. 25, is “Criador Anima Dos.”

“I didn’t know what to call it at first — maybe ‘The Short Notice,’” Arredondo said, breaking into a laugh. “It means ‘Creating Spirit.’ It actually has several different meanings in different slang, but that’s what I’m going with.”

The self-taught artist says that he is just a doodler.

“That started when I was just a child, doodling in my room with a pencil and paper on the old school books,” he says.

Arredondo recalls that after he had a piece at a show at Houston’s Lawndale Art Center, a reviewer in *glasstire.com* said “there’s always

one in a crowd — the doodler.”

“He said some other things as well, that I’m visceral, but I got a kick out of that,” Arredondo says.

There is a trend in the art world to recognizing “outsider art” category — artists with no formal training — a label Arredondo is happy to claim.

“When I was young I was pushed toward sports, which I liked,” he says. “But I always knew — knew, but not understanding — that there was something else I wanted to be doing. It was when I got out of high school that I found it as my outlet.”

While he was in school, Arredondo drew on glass with India ink, a process that is reversed from normal, with the outlines going on first. Following high school, Arredondo was on his own and says that led him to begin to explore art more fully.

“It was being bored that did it. I was on my own and poor. I had to make do with what I had. I always had the India ink pens to draw on glass, so any opportunity I had to get a piece of glass.... It’s pretty sad,” he says with a laugh.

“I learned how to stretch canvas and prime wood and I went from there,” he says. Then I started painting cars and when I started spray-

ing it didn’t take long before I thought, ‘I can put these together.’”

Arredondo works at Vin’s Body Shop in Mid-County painting cars, something he has done for 24 years.

“I had a friend who worked at a body shop and I started out washing cars before a friend taught me how to spray,” he says. “I like it, man. It’s always fast-paced, it’s always different.”

Several years ago he discovered Createx, a water-based car paint. It is meant to be sprayed, but Arredondo also uses a brush with the occasional spray.

“I like it — it’s a really unique paint,” he says. “It’s similar to the paint that we use on cars, but it’s water based. You can experiment with the colors.”

The paint has to be coated with “clear” to protect it, which gives his paintings their distinctive sheen.

Arredondo’s work is distinctive but he doesn’t work to a particular theme.

“I just pretty much go with scattered emotions,” he says. “It’s always a spur of the moment thing — whatever happens. I seldom ever start out knowing what I’m going to do. I would say that 99 percent of them start out by experimenting with colors. Then, if I see some-



thing in what I’m doing, I will run with it from there.”

Arredondo’s pieces have a fluidity of style and a musicality and rhythm. It is no surprise that he works with music playing in the background. Like his work, his tastes are eclectic ranging from Florence and the Machine to Radiohead, with a little Jack White thrown in for good measure.

While the majority of the work on display will be Arredondo’s, the show will also include work by Benson Austin and Chris Cox. Arredondo said he is trying to help them get some exposure.

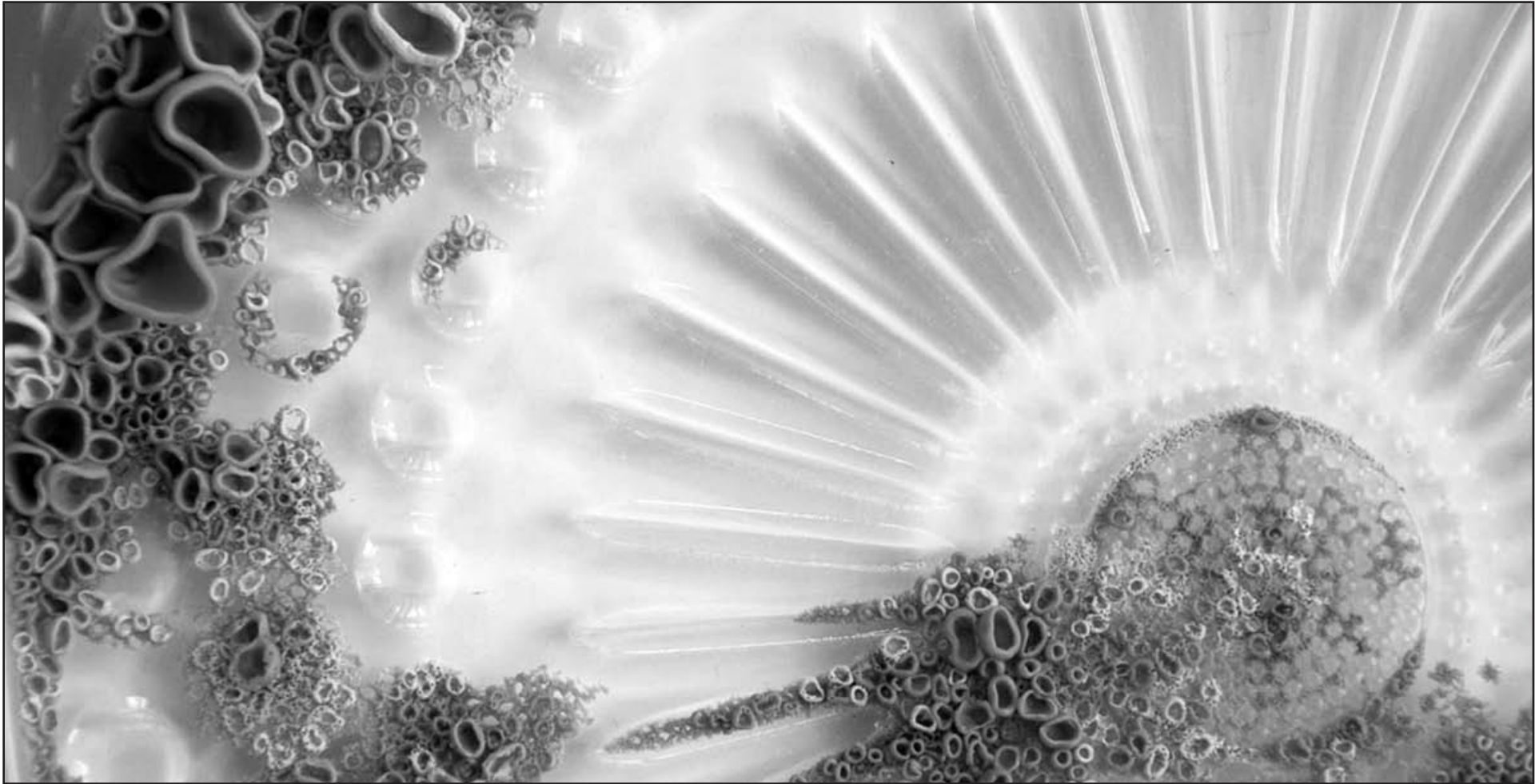
“They’re unheard of, more or less, that’s my main thing,” he says. “But they are good at what they do so I would like to bring them in.”

Arredondo said that the circumstances surrounding the show are “Irony as hell, man.” But maybe not. He was ready for a show and one came to him — but only because he never stops working and exploring his “Creating Spirit.”

There’s a lesson there, somewhere.



Marty Arredondo in his Beaumont studio.



A detail from **UNTITLED**, polymer clay, glass relish dish, 2011, by Jasmyne Graybill.

MOLD from page 7

and little depth — but in this case, “pretty” is important. Before she worked on the “pretty” pieces, Graybill created “Flood Line,” a site-specific installation using charcoal and acrylic to create a dingy room that looked as though it had been flooded.

“Visitors would come into the space and look at the other pieces, but no one would walk into the room,” she says, adding that several people complained that there were unsanitary conditions in the gallery because they thought it was real.

“I did several pieces like that and there was complete revulsion. I liked that, but I like what this does more because it has that repulsive nature to it, but at the same time I think most people are drawn into it because the colors are beautiful, it’s very tiny, it’s intimate.”

Her background is in drawing and painting but mid-way through her MFA program, she says that she “just got bored with painting.”

“I was making these objects that I was drawing and painting from and I became much more interested in making the objects than I was in painting them,” she says. “That led to a series of experimentations and playing and I finally landed on this body of work and I really love it.”

She started out using rice to make beanbags that looked like organisms. She would paint them, adding textures and colors.

However, she has not turned her back on her roots.

“If you look at the plates and you look at the work it’s still very painterly in a way,” she said. “I’m still really interested in color and pattern, as I think a lot of sculptors are.”

The current series began when an outbreak of swine flu hit Huntsville when she was teaching at Sam Houston State. People became paranoid about the objects they were touching. If they could see the viruses on the objects, what would they look like, Graybill won-

dered. So she made a handrail that represented that — “Although it probably looked a lot worse than it really was,” she says.

She was also working on a series of Petri dishes — some of which are in the show.

“About a year later I was at a garage sale and I saw some clear glass pie plates and I thought, ‘This is a giant Petri dish,’” she says. “That’s where this series took off.”

Graybill said that her great grandmother hand-painted china and whenever she visited she would see decorative plates all over the walls.

“A lot of the decorations you find in a home are just idealized versions of nature,” she said. “You see flowers, leaves or clusters of grapes on them. So I started to think, ‘Let’s show the more vilified aspects of nature on these plates, but make it in a way that they take on some of the physical and visual properties of the plate, and they become in their own way.’”

On one plate in the show, the webbing of the “mold” mimics the lace pattern of the decoration.

“It really plays with that idea of camouflage,” she says.

When Graybill creates her “organisms” she allows them to grow and evolve as naturally as possible. A keen gardener, she studies lichen, fungi and bacterial growth, but she tries to let the design find its own way as much as possible, not in a specific way, but more to get a feel for how these organisms grow.

“I let each plate tell me what to do,” she says. “I will look through dozens and dozens of plates until I find that one plate.”

Graybill uses a clay polymer to build the organisms on to the object. The polymer comes in basic colors and she mixes them together to create her own color blends.

The creation of the organisms is an intricate and time-consuming process, and a single plate may take 60 hours to complete. She extrudes the clay through a very fine mesh or she will use a pasta press to make thin layers. Other techniques include the use of dental

tools to sculpt individual tiny pieces. On one piece, the individual fronds are made from the plastic bristles of a brush that she inserts with tweezers.

The work can be tedious, Graybill says, but she finds she can get lost in the work, almost like a giant doodle.

“I have so much fun with it,” she says. “With some plates I start with a real solid idea, but with a lot of pieces, for instance this muffin pan, I added one tuft and then I think it would move this way, and then maybe I need a tuft over here. I’d wait until I did that and then I’d figure where did it go next, how does it move.”

The unnatural colors are in keeping with the unnatural environments on which the organisms are placed, she says, so they take on the unnatural qualities.

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing? I don’t know,” she says. “In some ways I think it’s a problem if you look at synthetic fertilizers and what they do. There’s a whole area in the Gulf of Mexico that’s a dead zone because there is so much nitrogen that nothing can survive.”

All the small things we don’t really pay attention to fall under Graybill’s view.

“They don’t get a lot of credit, and the credit we do give is often negative,” she says. “I’m kind of showing it in a new light that is both appealing and at the same time you are kind of grossed out by it.”

Graybill says the most important thing she would like to get out of the show is for the viewer to connect with the work in some way.

“It’s a universal experience to see mold and lichen somewhere,” she says. “I don’t want to send a message. I want the viewer to come up with his own questions, to leave the space and be a little more observant of what’s going on or be a little bit more tolerant of nature — to not feel the need to control it all the time.”

The Dishman Art Museum is located at the corner of MLK Parkway and E. Lavaca on the Lamar University campus in Beaumont.

For more information, call 409-880-8137.

TAOS from page 6

information on this artist in Russian sources.

The information on Gaspard’s life comes from his own stories, which were written down by his friend, writer Frank Waters. Published in the book titled “Leon Gaspard” in 1964, they became the artist’s official biography. According to Gaspard, his paternal ancestors were French Huguenots, who settled in Russia; his father was a fur merchant, with whom young Leon traveled in Siberia; and his mother was a brilliant pianist and a student of famous composer Anton Rubinstein.

Reality was quite different. There were no French Protestants, trips to Siberia or piano recitals in the artist’s childhood. He was born Leiba Schulman, in a poor Jewish family, either in or near the city of Vitebsk (today in the Republic of Belarus); according to some accounts, his father was a carpenter. Distant relatives (descendants of the artist’s brothers) still live in Vitebsk and a few Russian cities today. One of the nephews actually stayed in touch with his uncle all his life and met with him when Leiba Schulman, a.k.a. Leon Gaspard, visited Moscow in 1959.

Leiba Schulman started his art education at the famous school of Julius (Jehuda) Pen in Vitebsk. Since other schools in tsarist Russia did not accept Jewish students, practically all artistically-minded youngsters of Jewish background who lived close to Vitebsk received their first instruction in art at Pen’s school, including such famous artists as Marc Chagall, Ossip Zadkine and El Lissitzky. However, they attended the school later, notwithstanding Gaspard’s claims that he and Chagall were classmates. Schulman was one of Pen’s first students. Pen was impressed with his artistic talent and financially supported him when Schulman went to Paris to continue his studies.

Young Leiba Schulman came to Paris at the most exciting time, when classical art was being dismantled under energetic attack of modernists. He found lodgings at the famous artist community called La Ruche (Beehive), which provided cheap accommodations for aspiring artists from all over the world. It is possible that



Nicolai Fechin (1881-1955), **BARGE CAPTAIN**, after 1933
Gouache and oil on fabric mounted on paperboard
23 x 29 1.4 inches
Stark Museum of Art, 31.38.13

he met with many future celebrities, such as Picasso, Modigliani and Soutine, however, these claims have yet to be confirmed as well as the information that he studied under famous French painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau at the Académie Julian.

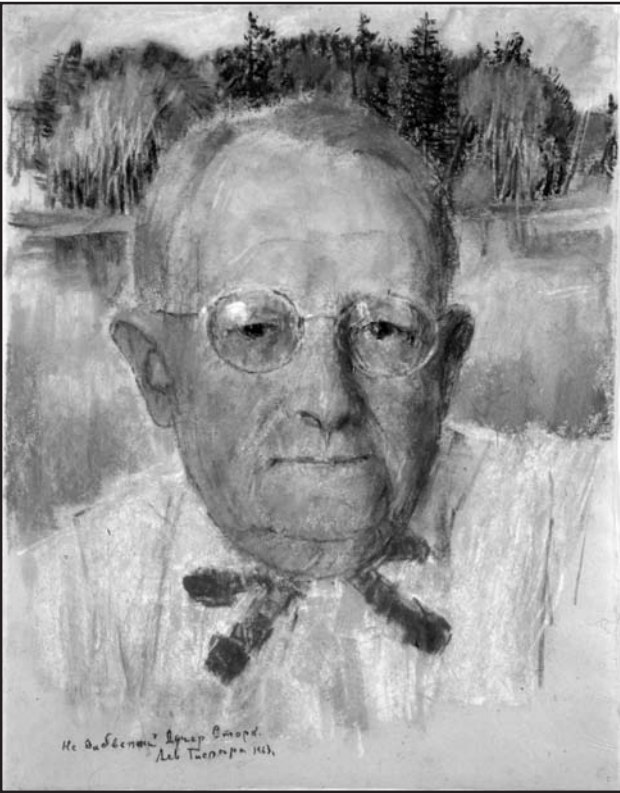
The mix of diverse styles in the Parisian art scene in the 1900s influenced and shaped Leiba Schulman’s style. His brushstroke is impressionistic in the way he places small areas of contrasting colors next to each other to create a mosaic-like visual effect. His bright color scheme and interest in patterns reminds the viewer of Fauvist paintings. Like in many modernist paintings, his forms are simplified and the space is flattened, although he never ventured far into the realm of abstraction. He always remained a realist, albeit with a modernist twist.

Schulman exhibited his works at the famous Salone d’Automne, the annual show of the artists who sought innovative artistic forms of expression. He also attracted attention of a few gallery owners and art dealers and had exhibitions in Belgium and Germany. Around 1910 the artist dropped his family name Schulman and started signing his works Leon Schulman Gaspard or simply Leon Gaspard. It also was at that time that he married an American girl, Evelyn Adell, who came to Paris with her mother and sisters to study ballet. Whether or not the name change was related to his marriage remains unknown.

At the beginning of World War I, Gaspard joined the French Air Force as an aerial observer. In August of 1914 his plane was shot down and the artist was severely wounded. After a long period of recuperation, he went to the United States and reunited with his wife in New York in 1916. Following the doctor’s advice to seek a better climate for his failing health, he and Adele settled down in Taos in 1918.

Both Fechin and Gaspard fell in love with New Mexico, its nature and its people. A lifelong student of the human character, Fechin was particularly fascinated by Taos Indians whose expressive features and personalities he conveyed in numerous portraits. Story-teller Gaspard was more interested in the life style of Pueblo, Apache, Hopi and Navajo and often visited Indian reservations. He found similarities between American Indians and the peoples of Asia whom he encountered during his travels across the Gobi Desert. Sometimes it is hard to tell whether the scene portrayed in his work is taking place in America or in Asia. For example, compare To the Christmas Fiesta and Souvenir of Manchuria. Both paintings feature a winter scene with tall conifers and a cortege of carriages with people dressed in colorful clothes driving down a winding path in the woods. Fechin obviously was looking forward to making Taos his permanent residence. He personally designed and built his house, which he decorated with ornate wood carvings. He inherited this talent from his father, a master craftsman who carved elaborate iconostases¹ for orthodox churches in Russia. However, his life in Taos was cut short in 1933 when his wife Alexandra demanded a divorce after 20 years of marriage. The artist and his teenage daughter Eya left for New York and later settled down in Southern California. During the last two decades of his life, Fechin extensively traveled, visited Mexico, Japan, Java and Bali and continued to be highly productive. The artist died in 1955 in Santa Monica.

Gaspard lived in Taos until the end of his life (he died in 1964). He also designed his own house and contracted local builders and craftsmen to build it. An architectural historian described it as a Byzantine-Pueblo style which “expressed the two parts of the world that Gaspard called home.” While the great hall had arched windows and European-style furniture, the rear part of the house had rectangular windows and a low portal



Leon Gaspard (1882-1964), **H.J. LUTCHER STARK**, 1963,
pastel on mulberry paper mounted on paperboard,
16 1/16 x 12 5/8 inches (40.8 x 32.1 cm)
Stark Museum of Art, 31.26.25

characteristic of Pueblo houses. The interiors were richly decorated with oriental rugs and various items from Gaspard’s travels in Asia, adding one more stylistic element into the mix.

Both artists left an enduring legacy. Today their works are in many museums and private collections. The Stark Museum of Art collection owns thirty-three paintings by Gaspard and fifty-two paintings, nine sculptures and a number of drawings by Fechin. Most of these works were acquired by H.J. Lutchter Stark, who avidly collected New Mexico artists and knew some of them personally. Lutchter Stark never met Nicolai Fechin, however, he was acquainted with Fechin’s ex-wife Alexandra and daughter Eya, as well as with Leon Gaspard.

In 1963, Gaspard visited Lutchter and Nelda Stark in Orange. This encounter inspired the artist to paint a portrait of his patron which features him in a nature environment. The portrait bears a handwritten inscription in Russian, which translates as “The unforgettable Lutchter Stark/Lev Gaspard.” The use of his Russian name instead of the frenchified one (Leon) seems significant. Although Gaspard traveled around the world and embraced many cultures, deep inside he always remained close to his Russian roots.

The exhibition “From Russia: Fechin and Gaspard in the Southwest” will be on view at the Stark Museum of Art from Feb. 18 through June 2. An opening reception is scheduled for Feb. 17 and will feature a lecture by David E. Brauer, senior lecturer at the Glassell School of Art, in the Lutchter Theater at 6:30 p.m. The lecture will be followed by a book-signing and reception at the museum. This event is free and open to the public.

For more information, visit www.starkmuseum.org.

¹ An iconostasis (also iconostas or icon screen) is a screen or wall which serves as a stable support for icons and marks the boundary between the nave and the altar or sanctuary.

BOOK from page 5

yellow on the page, but medieval painters did have yellow paint. Saffron, or the stigmas of the crocus flower, was simply mixed with a little water and glair to make a bright paint. Orpiment, a sulfide of arsenic imported from Asia minor, was a vivid yellow used to imitate gold in manuscript painting. Orpiment, however, reacted chemically when mixed with verdigris or lead white.

Perhaps the most famous color in medieval book painting is blue, used to represent the Virgin Mary. One of the most expensive sources of color was used to create the most brilliant blue paint: the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli, from Afghanistan. The stone contains impurities of calcite and iron pyrites, which when powdered created only a disappointing gray pigment. The ultramarine blue particles in the stone were separated from these impurities through a complicated technique that involved mixing powdered lapis lazuli with wax, oil and resin, and then kneading this paste under water until the blue separated out. Wealthy medieval patrons footed the bill for this expensive ultramarine color, but there were many sources of slightly less dazzling blue available to medieval painters.

The illuminator often painted with thin washes of color, and it was common for the painter to work on several illustrations at once, using one color at a time. For example, the artist might apply all the greens on a few pages and then move on to adding the reds. This way, he needed only to mix up color once for several illuminations.

Washes were overlaid with shadows and highlights, and sometimes the folds of figures' garments were defined with painted gold lines.

The final step of illumination was often to outline large areas of gold leaf with ink.

When the scribe had written the text with his quill, and the gold leaf was applied and burnished, and the illuminator had painted the miniatures, borders and initials with his handmade paints, the pages of the manuscript were folded and arranged in gatherings, or nestled groups of four pages. These gatherings were ordered, stacked atop each other and rested on a sewing frame, a tool used to keep them aligned. A bookbinder sewed the gatherings together with linen



Visitors to the Stark Museum view a display of tools and materials used in medieval manuscripts. Courtesy photo

thread on cords to form a book block, or codex. The codex was bound between two covers made of wooden boards. The linen cords were laced through channels carved in the boards, and then the book was covered with leather. The books were often decorated with leather tooling, jewels and metals. These sturdy wood and leather covers protected the delicate paintings and gold leaf in these special books for centuries, so that they might continue to be appreciated as precious objects of beauty today by young students and older visitors alike, in collections such as that of the Stark Museum of Art.

The exhibit Medieval Manuscripts, on view through Feb. 25, displays four books from the 15th and 16th centuries along with the materials of their making. Stop by to see the beetle bodies, lapis lazuli, gold leaf and calfskin that, to my students' delight, were the art supplies of choice in the Middle Ages.

Amelia Wiggins is public programs educator at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange.

VIEW from page 3

ing and Visual Arts Council was formed and has had an amazing record of art presentations by local and visiting artists.

I was there at the meeting and was recruited then to be a presenting artist for PVAC. The choice to do pottery presentations for PVAC was one of the smartest things I ever did and each year has been a rewarding experience that I look forward to even today.

On Jan. 26, a celebration of this benchmark will be held at the Ice House Museum with an exhibition by Herman Davis, Celia Coleman, Goldie Winger and myself. Educators recognize the importance of the arts on the developing brain of a young child. Our

task is to encourage an interest in the arts and to demonstrate the skill development in math, reading and comprehension along with the practice of complex problem solving — not only the concern for students exposure to the arts but exposure to the artists themselves, and to recognize that we all have unique qualities and that artists are able to embrace that and speak from their own voice through their art.

Congratulations for the foresight to invest in the future of your children and the willingness to utilize artist and craftspersons to tell their story.

So don't wait to see if the world is ending this year before you send your membership. If it does end you won't miss the money and if it doesn't end you are already paid up and ready to return to the world of the living, happy in the thought of your support for the arts.



Mission Statement

Founded in 1983, The Art Studio, Inc. is devoted to: providing opportunities for interaction between the public and the Southeast Texas community of artists; furnishing affordable studio space to originating artists of every medium; promoting cultural growth and diversity of all art forms in Southeast Texas; and providing art educational opportunities to everyone, of every age, regardless of income level, race, national origin, sex or religion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of The Art Studio, Inc. is to (1) provide educational opportunities between the general public and the community of artists and (2) to offer sustained support for the artist by operating a non-profit cooperative to provide studio space and exhibition space to working artists and crafts people, and to provide an area for group work sessions for those artists and crafts people to jointly offer their labor, ideas, and enthusiasm to each other.

GOALS

1. To present public exhibitions
2. To provide educational opportunities
3. To provide accessible equipment for artists
4. To provide peer feedback through association with other artists and crafts people

OBJECTIVES

1. To present 10 art exhibitions per year
2. To maintain equipment for artists in a safe working environment
3. To provide better access to artists for the public
4. To offer regularly scheduled adult and children's classes
5. To develop and maintain public activities with all sectors of the community
6. To develop and maintain equipment to aid artists in their work
7. To provide a display retail outlet for artists
8. To expand programming and activities with increased facility space

SOUTHEAST TEXAS
Arts
COUNCIL
This project is funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, Dishman Trust, Entergy, HEB, and the Vic Rogers Foundation through the Southeast Texas Arts Council

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Art Studio is looking for energetic people who have a few hours a month to help us in the following areas:

OFFICE SUPPORT • BUILDINGS & GROUNDS
SPECIAL EVENTS • MAILOUTS

If you are interested in one or more of these opportunities or if you know of anyone who might be, give us a call at 409-838-5393



WE WANT YOU FOR BAND NITE

Hear original music by local musicians at



For upcoming gigs, visit the studio's facebook page

\$5 admission

All ages welcome • 21 and up BYOB and have your ID.

Class Search.com



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE

- CRIADOR ANIMA DOS
- THOUGHTCRIME: MUSINGS FROM AREA POETS
- 'MOLDY' DISHMAN SHOW
- MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

ISSUE

When you support The Art Studio with your membership, you receive ISSUE,
Southeast Texas' and Southwest Louisiana's alternative press as well as class schedules, invitations to opening receptions and various Studio functions.

Volunteers

These people are
the life blood
of our organization.
WE COULDN'T DO IT
WITHOUT YOU!
To volunteer, drop by
The Art Studio, Inc.,
or call 409-838-5393.

Bryan Castino
April Ringland
Heather & Adam Butler
Andy Ledesma
Rhonda Rodman
Sue Wright
Cyndi Grimes
Rhonda McNally
Andy Coughlan
Olivia Busceme
Ben Jennings
Jordan Johnston
Beth Gallaspy
Kim McGlothlin
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John Roberts
Philip Grice
Beau Dumesnil
Karen Dumesnil
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Michael Snowden

JOIN US
FOR ART OPENINGS ON
THE FIRST SATURDAY
OF THE MONTH
THIS MONTH:
CRIADOR ANIMA DOS
MARTY ARREDONDO
WITH GUESTS BENSON AUSTIN AND CHRIS COX
FEBRUARY 4
GALLERY RECEPTION IS 7-10 P.M.



SOUTHEAST
T E X A S



COUNCIL

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the Texas Commision on the
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THE ART STUDIO INC. ISSUE
DISTRIBUTION POINTS

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ART MUSEUM OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS	500 MAIN
BABE DIDRIKSON ZAHARIAS MUSEUM	1750 IH-10E
BEAUMONT CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU	801 MAIN
(IN CITY HALL)	
BEAUMONT ART LEAGUE (FAIRGROUNDS)	2675 GULF ST
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THE CAFE	730 LIBERTY
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QUIZNOS	3939 SUITE 9 DOWLEN
RED B4 BOOKS	4495 CALDER
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STUDIO 77	6372 COLONNADE CENTER
TRENDY'S	5905 PHELAN, STE. E
WEST END MEDICAL PLAZA	2010 DOWLEN
WILSON CHIROPRACTIC	7060 PHELAN BLVD.

PARKDALE

RAO'S BAKERY	4440 DOWLEN
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ORANGE

STARK MUSEUM OF ART	712 GREEN AVE.
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