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## DIVA exhibit "bridges" gap between student, city art communities



A 'Bridges' exhibit — a collaboration between community, University students — is open to the public at DIVA Center on Fridays and Saturdays in Downtown Eugene. (Alex McDougall/Oregon Daily Emerald)

By BEN KENDALL

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Grasping a tube of paint in one hand and a small plastic cup of wine in the other, a guest of the monthly First Friday Art Walk in downtown Eugene stares intently at his target. With a flick of the wrist and a toss of the shoulder, purple paint is scattered across the wall in a random pattern. Other people kneel down near the baseboards and, with careful movements, add brush strokes for their own personal contribution to the evolving, multimedia piece of art spreading itself around the room.

Going from February to March, the "Bridges" exhibit put on by the Downtown Initiative for Visual Arts is an effort to foster collaboration on arts between the community-at-large and students at the University. Anybody can come to the location and go to town on the wall around them with whatever medium suits their fancy.

“We’ve got paint, latex, plaster, whatever you want, you can use it,” said Sarah Whitling, a University arts administration graduate student and coordinator of “Bridges.”

“The students at the UO and the local community art scene are two different entities, and they don’t need to be,” she said. “There’s so much potential. I want to bring the students in here and the community out there together.”

The walls of the inside of the DIVA office are a hodgepodge of materials. The supplies for “Bridges” were all frugally acquired from recycling centers like BRING and Materials Exchange Center for Community Arts in Eugene.

“BRING is awesome. We got lots of cheap lumber from them,” Whitling said.

Clad in pink tights and striped jean shorts, undergraduate University student and artist Sarah Refvem was hard at work on a piece of her own.

“Tonight it’s all about potential. The fact that it’s throughout the month is important and not the final product,” she said. “This is a way to bring some youthful energy to the show. We’re going to get some interesting, provocative stuff.”

Another student artist, Julian Watts, chimed in: “The truth is, a lot of galleries don’t show student art. This is a way of saying ‘This is our community.’ It’s a good opportunity for students. It’s not a set show. The original idea is ‘bridging’ the gap between the community and students.”

“Now that we’re in our new space, we have to pare down our focus,” DIVA chair member Miriam Alexis Jordan said. “DIVA is all volunteer driven, representing the community of visual artists. Our mission is to strengthen connections, share knowledge and build community.”

The “Bridges” exhibit is now open for collaboration Thursday and Friday from noon to 5 p.m. and Saturday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. until March 2, when the finished piece will be presented.

DIVA has set up a blog about the event at <http://bridgesatdiva.wordpress.com/>

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