

2 Serving Up Beauty

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By Kelsey Osterman
Editorial Intern

James Mitchell has only been working with acrylic paint since January, but he has already had eight paintings featured in an art show.

"I just want to have fun," he said of his pieces which were featured at [Miriam's Kitchen](#)'s third annual art show "Vernissage: Art Extravaganza!" "I don't want it to feel like work."



Mitchell is just one of many artists whose work was showcased on the basement walls at Western Presbyterian Church on Feb. 25. The exhibit featured work produced during [Miriam's Studio](#), a twice-daily art group. But the studio hours are not limited to the visual arts. They also include yoga, free haircuts, or creative writing. "This week alone we've covered e.e. cummings, Bayard Rustin, Nikki Giovanni and Mary Oliver...and it's only Wednesday," said

Catherine Crum, deputy director at Miriam's Kitchen.

At the art extravaganza, a spontaneous poetry table was set up where guests could present a topic to one of three poets, who would then craft a personalized poem on the spot.

More than 100 guests turned out for the celebration, mingling among tables covered with paint-splattered cloths. Each table also held a piece of green paper that described the meaning of the "vernissage," a French word describing a private art exhibition the night before the official opening. Though the show at Miriam's Kitchen was open to the public, the word was chosen for its own beauty as much as to describe the exhibit.

"We love the word 'vernissage,'" Crum said. "We're not just visual artists, but we're also written-word artists."

Mitchell said he never knows where he's going with a piece when he begins painting, sometimes layering new art over old work on the same canvas. When Mitchell first started creating art as a child, he used tape to make sure his lines were straight. But these days, his work is uninhibited. He wonders if perhaps, his new style reflects the sort of weightlessness that goes with having left many things behind.

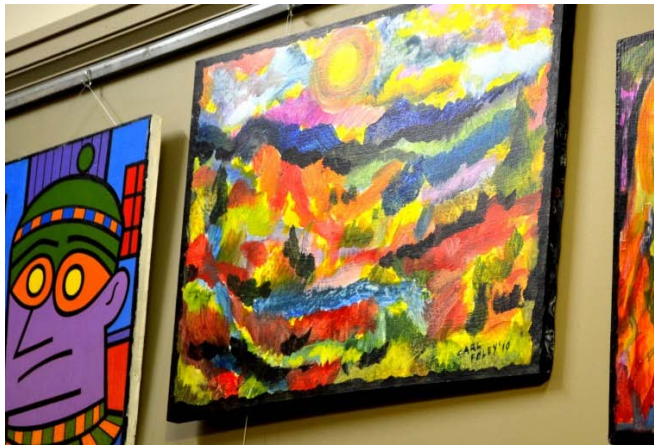
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"Being homeless is more freeing," he said.

Without a job to solidify a constant schedule, Mitchell's day is anchored by the art group, providing a sense of structure in his life.

Though both use vibrant colors, Mitchell's work is very different from the paintings of Carl Foley. Foley, 62, has painted since he was 11 years old, but said he has only now reached the pinnacle of his artistic expression. A clearly defined purple face peered at passers-by from a painting, catching many admiring glances and comments.



Surprises were everywhere in the show, created by people who, with a little help, have a safe place to work and some paint or clay or a handful of donated beads, are managing to rediscover their stories and talents.

"We're focusing on individuals as artists, not as people who are experiencing homelessness," Crum said.

Category : Current

One Response to "Serving Up Beauty"

Leon
Hansen
Monday
March
14, 2011

[Reply](#)

I've seen the current paper issue, there's a female portrait next to the colorful abstract landscape.



I would love to see more paintings of Carl Foley, could you post more photos on-line of his work ?

Best Regards, Leon

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