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Hastings College project brings art to campus

JARAD JOHNSON
 Hastings Tribune

HASTINGS — A team of students at Hastings College and Sarah Swist, an assistant professor of visual arts, are trying to add a little variety to the daily routine of the college community and visitors by hanging pieces of art across the campus.

The Scintilla Art Project is a monthly rotating exhibition of art pieces from national and international artists that started last March. Each piece is small enough to fit in one of the five wall-hung acrylic boxes, each in a different building on the campus. A description of the piece and artist hang next to the art box.

“It’s pretty exciting to get work internationally here and just place it in public spaces where people’s daily routine might be altered a little bit,” Swist said.

Scintilla comes directly from the Latin word that means “spark.” The 1-cubic-foot boxes are designed to be simple and non-obstructive but accessible to everyone. The themes carry into the installation of the pieces — in public and open to spectators.

“I’ve actually come across people who are walking by, and they seem interested, so they get to handle the work. They can hold it or ask questions or talk about it. It’s a

great way to start a conversation,” Swist said.

The project was funded by a Hastings College Foundation Board of Trustees Innovation Grant. The innovation grants are a new initiative, starting last fall, that provides up to \$5,000 to approved projects. The projects must be used to improve teaching and learning, campus life, and other benefits to Hastings College, according to an October news release.

New artwork will be placed in the boxes every month. The pieces come from artists from the United States and around the world. April’s collection included works from Belgrade, Serbia, and South Korea.

Swist found the artists through the social media website Instagram. She said that she wants to help emerging artists by giving them opportunities to show their work.

“It’s great to support people who are trying to make a living off of their work. There are a lot of artists out there who really want their work to be shared, and we have a great platform to share these little treasures that they’ve made,” she said.

The art boxes are open to any medium that will fit. In March, a piece by Lauren Carter from Chicago, called “Keepsakes,” included the

artist’s fingernail clippings and hair inserted in rabbit-shaped ornaments. April’s installation focused on functional ceramics to coincide with a functional ceramics sale that month.

The next few months will include work from students at Hastings College. Swist hopes to spend one month focusing on digital fabrication, including 3D printing or laser-cut materials.

“We’re supporting emerging artists on campus too because they get the publicity and a show on their resume, and then students get the experience of installing it,” Swist said.

After one year, students

will vote to bring one of the featured artists to the campus to give a lecture. By then, more than 50 non-student pieces will be displayed.

The boxes were made in the digital fabrication lab and wood shop in the Jackson Dinsdale Art Center. Each box is made of acrylic, cut using the lab’s laser cutter, and a wooden base. The innovation grant paid for the materials and box maintenance.

Swist said she hopes to add more boxes in the future. She also suggested a future call-for-entry that may include a fee to help maintain the boxes after one year.



JARAD JOHNSON, HASTINGS TRIBUNE

The Scintilla Art Project is a monthly rotating exhibition of art pieces at Hastings College.