



Anna Grace/Index

Fabric work by professor Kelsey Wiskirchen hangs in the Kirksville Arts Association, where a reception took place Tuesday. The pieces pay homage to women who work with textiles.



Anna Grace/Index

"Doña Antonia" was among Wiskirchen's works displayed at the Kirksville Arts Association. The works portray women from Bolivia, South Africa and the United States.

Women woven together by art

Professor uses woven images to tell stories of women the world

BY CHELSIE YOKUM
Staff Reporter

Different artists have tried to use their art to reach audiences for different purposes. Fiber art professor Kelsey Wiskirchen said she tries to foster community by using her art to build relationships with fellow women.

Wiskirchen's work, which focuses specifically on weaving and sewing, will be displayed in an exhibit called "Fabric Art" 24 to Feb. 28 at the Kirksville Arts Association.

Wiskirchen said her exhibit will include panels of fabric she hand-stitched to create drawings. "The transparent, loosely

woven fabric that I stitch onto has a transparency that allows light and shadow to become part of the work, which relates to the ephemeral quality of time and stories," Wiskirchen said. "The stitched line has a raised, textural quality that is different from a mark on paper."

Wiskirchen said this tactility, as well as the repetition of the process, are why she chose thread as her medium.

Wiskirchen said she began sewing when she was seven years old, learning from her mother and grandmother. She declared fiber art as her major at Truman State and received her master's in fiber art at Arizona State University during 2012.

Wiskirchen chose to use women working together and the stories they tell as the cen-

tral theme that wove her pieces together. According to her blog, www.kelseyviola.com, Wiskirchen is driven to create work with a tradition of bringing communities together.

Wiskirchen said her experiences during the past couple of years working with women's weaving cooperatives in Bolivia and South Africa for her master's influenced the development of her theme.

"I'm interested in the idea that every community in the world has a weaving tradition," Wiskirchen said. "Although the specific techniques are diverse, all over the world women come together to share time as they create textiles. Having the opportunity to work with weavers in Bolivia, South Africa and the United States has given me some direct experience with

this universality."

In addition to the images stitched onto her panels, Wiskirchen included text to accompany some of the images. She said the texts she included are stories people learned from their mothers or grandmothers.

"Cloth serves many functions — warmth and protection, art and in many cases, it empowers the people who create it," Wiskirchen said. "My work is about communities of women working and weaving, and the stories that are shared through generations of women engaging in this act together."

She said a lot of the stories told through her work come from the Kirksville community, so she contacted the KVAA to show her work within the community.

KVAA director Judy Neuweg said Wiskirchen's work was ap-

proved for the exhibit by the KVAA's Visual Arts Committee. The committee invites artists to hold exhibits and approve requests from artists. Neuweg said the KVAA employs a Freedom of Artistic Expression policy.

"We address a wide variety of artwork, trying to foster a mutual respect for the beliefs and values that everyone [has within] the first amendment, if they would like to exhibit," Neuweg said.

Sharon Pritchard, chair of the KVAA's Visual Arts Committee, said she loved the idea of Wiskirchen's theme.

"With all the things that are going on in different countries with women and their role, I think that it is particularly important that we pay attention to women and their capabilities," Pritchard said.

Students share language, culture

German students create program to teach middle school students

BY ALYSSA HUSKINS
Staff Reporter

It may be a small town, but Brian Jacob is working to instill a sense of global awareness in the Kirksville area.

Through his contacts with German professor Andrea Davis and Susan Hazen, Director of the Rapid Academic Program — the gifted program at Kirksville Middle School, Jacob has designed a German language program for accelerated students at Kirksville Middle School, he said. The project was initiated during the fall semester, though Jacob said he did not begin teaching at the middle school until the beginning of the spring semester.

Jacob, a pre-MAE student studying German and music, said he became interested in the program as a result of his own experiences learning German. As a foreign language student, Jacob said he

understands the importance of beginning to learn a language and a new culture at a young age.

"In middle school, I had a history teacher with a minor in German, and each day they put a German word of the day on the board," Jacob said. "This sparked my interest in the language. I would like to do the same for the RAP students. Basically, what I'm going to try to do is give them day-to-day words that can be picked up and used quickly."

Like Jacob, Davis said she understands the importance of educating students in a foreign language, specifically German. Davis said, according to the Goethe Institute, every third person in the European Union speaks German, either as their native language or as a secondary language.

"If [America] wants to be globally competitive, we must look to those numbers," Davis said. "German is very important in science, in the arts, in philosophy, but also in business. Any international connection needs German."

However, Missouri legislation recently has begun to relax state-wide foreign language requirements. According to

the Education Commission of the States, Missouri no longer requires students to take courses in a foreign language prior to graduation.

Regarding legislation change, Davis said she hopes programs such as the one spear-headed by Jacob and Hazen will help German and other languages gain footing within public schools.

"If we build the need [for languages], then it can be filled," Davis said. "We are trying to create the need for German from the ground up."

Moreover, Davis said understanding the culture of a country comes hand-in-hand with learning its language, and knowing the people of a nation often is vital for jump-starting enterprises abroad. Walmart made an attempt to establish chains in Germany during 1996, Davis said. The endeavor failed, however, largely due to misunderstandings about cultural practices.

"In Germany, people do not smile without reason," Davis said. "This is an aspect of their culture which Walmart did not understand, and so having greeters in the stores did not make sense to Germans. It was imposing American cul-

ture on the German people without first understanding their ways."

Sophomore CiCi Shamieva said she understands the importance of learning a language to learn a culture. Shamieva currently is fluent in four languages and hopes to learn three more in the future.

"[Learning a second language] broadens one's world view," Shamieva said. "It opens opportunities for travel. You can make a lot of new friends all over the world."

Shamieva said she is fluent in Russian, Tajic, Uzbek and English, which opens a wide variety of possibilities for future prospects.

"[Learning a foreign language] can be challenging, but I think it's important to have a personal goal for learning a language," Shamieva said. "A trip to the country that speaks the language, the ability to use it in a future profession, are some of the goals that make the sometimes difficult process of learning a language meaningful and exciting."

Shamieva said she intends to begin learning French during the upcoming fall semester and to learn Farsi and Turkish as well.

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