

Centralia College Instructor Captures National Photography Award



Courtesy photo

Instructor's Art Wins National Award

Alexander Solomon won a national award with this image, which combined five different photographs.

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A new teacher at Centralia College is not only starting to leave his mark on his students, but has also left a mark on the art community, winning a national best contemporary photography award as well as earning his own solo exhibit at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art.

Alexander Solomon, the college's new darkroom photography, digital photography and computer graphics teacher, submitted his piece into the competition. The piece was later purchased by the Fort Wayne Museum of Art to be installed as a permanent part of its collection.

"It's going to be on display in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and he'll also have his own solo show there in March," said Amanda Haines, director of college relations. "It's a big national award."

Solomon, who is hard at work on his solo exhibit, said the experience was very rewarding.

"It's very gratifying," Solomon said. "It's always nice to have your work recognized."

Solomon was one of the 78 juried artists who entered the photography competition, landing the first-place prize. The piece he entered was one image that was created from five separate photos Solomon took himself. In order to

achieve the finished product, Solomon used medium format film cameras, scanned the film itself and then combined multiple images in Photoshop to create a finished product, a completely fictional place.

It was the first time one of Solomon's pieces was purchased by a museum and also the first time he has been given an opportunity to hold his own show.

"I was most excited about having the opportunity to have a solo show," Solomon said. "That's a really big deal for me having a solo show at a museum. It's like my first big show of my work."

So far he has approximately 11 pieces completed, but the goal is to have 20 finished pieces so he has some choices for decorating the 1,000-square-foot space. He plans to showcase 10 to 12 of his pieces.

Solomon's passion for art and teaching is palpable and something he strives to pass on to whoever is willing to learn.

Art found Solomon in college after he enrolled in an art class. Although his degree at the time was English, Solomon realized he had a real interest in the artistic process and switched majors to follow his newly rediscovered passion for art.

Solomon completed his undergraduate degree at Portland State University, specializing in printmaking. That focus changed when he attended Cranbrook Academy of Art for his master's degree, which focused on photographic work.

Cranbrook allowed Solomon to return back to the small, intimate setting of his childhood schools, something he now aims to provide his students with.

"Before fifth grade I went to a lot of small, experimental hippie schools as a kid. It was great," Solomon said.

He said the setting of his elementary education was both very encouraging and nurturing, a model Cranbrook also aims for.

According to Solomon, Cranbrook has approximately 165 students, with 13 to 20 students within each department. The program provided an apprenticeship-style learning format, offering studio-based experience.

The small classroom size at Centralia College is something Solomon can relate to and something he is happy to be apart of.

"I think working at a smaller college rather than a larger college is a more intimate experience and you get to interact with students more," Solomon said. "I think it's a more effective way to teach."

Centralia College is the third place Solomon has taught art, and his goal is to hand down his personal experiences as a visual artist to his students.

"The goal is to just share with my students, any students who have the goal of being a practicing fine artist, what it's like, what they have to do, what's difficult and what's easy," Solomon said. "I think that's important."

