



UWG ART PROGRAM FEATURES ALUMNI TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' CREATIVITY

JEFF IGBOKWE
Contributing Writer

For the next couple weeks, the Art Program at the University of West Georgia is holding its annual student art exhibition. The exhibition is juried this year by UWG alumni Brittany Watkins. Each year, the exhibition aims to honor the best artwork produced by UWG students throughout the year. They awarded Donavon Thomas with the prize for best work of the show for his Zen Sculpture.

Born in Carrollton, Ga Watkins now lives and works as a full-time artist and adjunct professor in Columbia, Sc., where she runs the Goodall Art Gallery at Columbia College. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at UWG in 2012, and then went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts degree at Florida State University in 2016. Her work serves as an analysis of contemporary society through a lens of psychoanalysis and social critique as she moves between a range of different media.

"I would say that I mix a number of artistic styles, and throughout the years I've kind of found my own aesthetic," said Watkins. "A few that have influenced me are looking at the modern art movements such as abstract expressionism, impressionism, but more than impressionism, I would say fauvism, which is not as well known, but I like the way that they began to approach color, symbolism, and postmodern ideas. Because I'm an installation artist, I have always engaged with the question of what art can be and how it can exist in a variety of spaces, and how the viewer interacts and engages with the art beyond just an object."

In her speech she spoke about the jurying process, and how she judged the show, she had given a quote from Russian writer Leo Tolstoy which read "if we say that the aim of any activity is merely for our pleasure and define it solely by that pleasure, our definition will evidently be a false one. But this is precisely what has occurred in the

efforts to define art."

"What he is saying here is that it's not purely based on aesthetic beauty and pleasure, but there can be more depth to an artwork other than what is visible on the surface," explained Watkins. "When I was looking at the student's work, not only was I looking for good presentation and good craftsmanship, but I was also looking for something that captivated me, emotionally and critically. Was there a perspective that really engages with the world around us right now?"

"I was also looking at the persistence of material, so if I could tell that a student had continued to experiment and work with said material," Watkins continued. "I was also looking to see if there were any attempts to depict something that was not typically seen, so showcasing the unseen in a visual form, abstraction. And ultimately the overall execution of the work. Those are the things I look for when judging."

Watkins expressed that her hometown of Carrollton has played into effect when it came to her developing an interest in art. She noted how her kindergarten and first grade teachers noticed her attention span for art, which exceeded the other students in her age group. After a brief absence from art as she didn't have it in school for a couple of years, Watkins was accepted into the art program at UWG, which was the start of her professional journey. Because of her hometown influence, Watkins stated that she will always have an interest in supporting arts and culture in Carrollton.

"Because [Carrollton] is not the biggest city, I feel that it is extremely important that the young people, and really everyone has access to art and culture," Watkins said. "Many times people will have the desire to run to the larger cities where they think they can find art, but for that exact reason is why it is really important for people to come to places like Carrollton and support art, and support culture."

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Photo: Jeff Igbokwe, *The West Georgian*

IFC COOKS UP A DELICIOUS START TO THEIR SEMESTER

DOUGLAS SALTER
News Editor

The Inner Fraternity Council (IFC) is off to a blazing start this semester after hosting The 2024 IFC Chili Cook-Off. The event was held Wednesday February 7th at the Greek Village Pavilion. It is no secret that every fraternity and their members love some friendly competition and it was as fierce as ever. After a month of school underway, this is the first big event of the semester that the fraternities could compete against one another. Every fraternity apart from IFC was invited to participate and all eight showed up, which created an all-out battle.

The rules were simple because

there was only one. Each pot of chili had to be prepared by a member of the submitting fraternity. You could not buy pre-made chili, nor could you have your parents make it. In terms of creation, time, how many members helped, that was all up to the fraternities themselves. While many of the IFC based competitions are focused on athletics, the chili cook-off allowed for a nice change of pace with just as much entertainment.

"We wanted to do a chili cook-off because we thought it combined things people like," said Head of Public Relations for IFC Holden Rogers. "Everyone loves to eat and

everyone loves to eat with people they know and enjoy."

In terms of the competition, five judges were selected to try and vote on the chili to determine a winner. The judges were from outside IFC to determine a non-biased result.

"We decided that it should be some of the members from the other Greek councils that should be judges," said Rogers. "Each judge was told to give a bowl of chili a certain number of points for how much they liked it. Then, we tallied all the points and got a winner."

After a very quick deliberation, it was determined that Alpha Sigma Phi won the chili competition for their amazing effort. They were praised by everyone for their excellent, and now award-winning chili.

"The winner got a trophy topped with a statue of a bowling pot that

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said they won the contest,” said Rogers. “They also received a \$50 Visa gift card.”

Not only was the cook-off a competition based event. After the winner was crowned, there was also a massive feast for a good cause. Anyone was invited to come up and purchase a bowl of chili for just three dollars.

“The money that we raise is gonna go right back to the fraternities by using it to pay for bigger and better events in the future,” said Rogers. “I think that the event went really well. There was a huge turn out and we sold a lot of chili.”

As the semester carries on, we can only expect IFC to cook up even more excellent events like this one.

“The main events we are looking forward to is our IFC Softball vetermined,” said Rogers. “We also have The Greek Olympics in March.”



Photo courtesy of IFC

FEATURE

PEACE IN CUPCAKES PROVIDES TASTY TREATS FOR ANY OCCASION

EMMA SWALES
Editor-in-Chief

Valentine’s Day is almost here and it’s time to start thinking of heart-shaped goodies to gift to your loved ones. Instead of traditional roses, why not go with something that everyone loves, a sweet treat. Peace in Cupcakes Bakery is located less than a mile away from the University of West Georgia and offers an endless variety of sweets and goodies for any holiday or occasion.

This made-from-scratch bakery is located at 949 Maple St., in Carrollton, Ga., and offers cupcakes, cakes, macarons, cookies, brownies and more. The store opened in July 2021 when baker Mandy Peace decided to team up with partner Morgan Hyde to fulfill her dream of opening her own bakery.

“When Covid hit I thought well I’m just going to do it,” said Peace. “I talked to my husband and my baking partner Morgan and they were all for it, so in January of 2021 we started to really look into it and started searching for places to rent all over town. We did everything in here ourselves, we brought in all of the equipment and it was just me and her without a lot of funding to do it.”

Soon after the bakery’s opening, the pair got to work and began growing their menu and overall brand. Peace in Cupcakes also offers specialty desserts and is open to taking custom orders. Peace explained that if a customer has a specific dessert in mind that is not on the menu, she will ask for a recipe and make it for them.

Along with their lengthy menu, Peace offers fun packages for different holidays and occasions. Each package contains classic sugar cookies and icing to decorate. For February, the bakery offers

a holiday package that contains heart-shaped cookies, sprinkles and icing. These Valentine’s Day cookie kits are just one example of the holiday-themed treats offered this month.

“For Valentine’s Day, we do chocolate-covered strawberries, heart-shaped macarons, heart-shaped cakes, cake truffles and my new bouquets,” said Peace. “My bouquets are made of cupcakes with icing that makes them look like a bunch of flowers.”

Peace stated that Valentine’s Day is one of the busier holidays for the bakery, alongside graduation season. Once May rolls around, graduation season begins and parties are being planned. Peace in Cupcakes is happy to collaborate often with the University of West Georgia and make tons of custom-baked goods for graduates all around Carrollton.

“I do a lot of stuff during graduation time,” said Peace. “I offer iced sugar cookies and we do a lot of cookie cakes and specialty cupcakes for the graduates and the parties. I do graduations mainly for West Georgia, but I’ve done some for all different kinds of schools.”

Peace in Cupcakes also collaborates with Housing and Residence Life at UWG. The bakery makes cakes and other desserts for different university events and gatherings.

“I made the birthday cake for Wolfie this year and last,” said Peace. “I did the whole birthday party for him at the basketball game. I made the cupcakes and the big cake.”

Peace explained that she is happy with the bakery’s growth over the years and hopes to expand the Peace in Cupcakes brand. Although there is only one bakery location, Peace in Cupcakes travels to Bremen every Wednesday and Saturday to sell baked goods at Thriftown Grocery. “I go to Thriftown two days a week and it’s sort of like a second location,” said Peace. “I want to branch out to wholesale and try and get some of my stuff in coffee shops and businesses around Carrollton. A second location would be great.”



Photo: Mandy Peace

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BLESSED BRAND CLOTHING HAS A BRIGHT FUTURE

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Contributing Writer

When a person desires to spread a message that they are deeply passionate about, that person has many options. Some individuals choose to write creative works that bring underrepresented groups and social issues into the limelight. Other individuals may choose to communicate their values and ideals through painting, drawing and other forms of visual expression. The University of West Georgia encourages students to use their talents and gifts to not only make money but to also inspire others. One student is doing this through his clothing line.

Eric Jackson, a business student at the University of West Georgia, headed to Clark Atlanta University on Feb. 1 in promotion of his clothing line "Blessed Brand Clothing." Blessed Brand Clothing is a spiritually-based clothing line started by Jackson in his pursuit of spreading the Christian faith.

"The mission behind the brand is to spread the Gospel through clothing. I want to allow people to understand and know what Jesus Christ did for them through his death and resurrection," said Jackson. "He's offering salvation to all of us because we all fall short of the glory of God. I wanted to portray

that message through clothing using imagery and scripture."

After becoming a Christian in 2020 during the pandemic, Jackson experienced a deep desire within his heart to share that message with both his friends and people he did not know.

"I then wanted to start a mission for something bigger than just me," said Jackson. "One thing I was talented at was designing clothing."

However, as to be expected with starting anything new, starting this business venture was not without its doubts and hesitations.

"COVID was going on and I didn't really have a lot of community or entrepreneurial friends, so I was doing pretty much everything on my own," said Jackson. "I was learning mainly from losses and lessons as I tried to figure everything out."

Jackson did not always know exactly what the next step was in the beginning, which resulted in having to take losses at times. However, rather than being devastated by this, Jackson saw this as an opportunity to be a better and smarter entrepreneur.

"One of the losses was spending a lot of unnecessary money on clothing and just slapping designs on them," said Jackson. "I was thinking that I could just put the word 'Blessed' onto the clothing, but I needed to

stop just doing what I wanted to do and look at what my target audience wanted."

Jackson advises all aspiring entrepreneurs to seek wisdom and have a business plan in place, even if that means using seemingly elementary planning processes.

"I remember how in second grade when we would write papers, we would have to draw out the main idea, three supporting ideas, and chart a sort of diagram before we even started writing the paper," said Jackson. "Yes, learning lessons through losses can definitely be a great teacher but you can also save a lot of time if you have the plan and wisdom beforehand."

And while Jackson knows that making plans and learning from your mistakes are essential to success, Jackson believes that the ultimate key is to believe in the aim of your business.

"If it were easy everyone would do it," said Jackson. "You have to stick to whatever your mission is. And if the mission is bigger than yourself, you'll never give up on it."



Photo: Breanna Tillie, *The West Georgian*

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

ARGYLLE FILM REVIEW: TWISTING INTO DUMB FUN

DOUGLAS SALTER
News Editor

Matthew Vaughn makes his return to the spy genre with his latest movie *Argylle*. Vaughn previously directed all 3 *Kingsman* movies (*Kingsman: The Secret Service*, *Kingsman 2: The Golden Circle* and *The Kingsman*). In his previous efforts, Vaughn has given his spy movies a sense of originality. The films are not supposed to be drama ridden like *James Bond*, but they are also not laugh out loud comedies. Vaughn designates his spy movies to be clever, but still developmental. With *Argylle* he takes a different approach that did not exactly do things for the better.

Argylle is about a writer named Elly Conway. Elly makes fictional spy novels about a spy named *Argylle*. *Argylle* is a charismatic spy that sort of has an unclear motive of his role. However, he tries to keep his tough guy, does not go by the rules nature by pushing it into his more humor based partner Wyatt. What makes the books so successful is Elly's imagination. The way she writes about the spy's personality and experience so well as if she is one or has at least encompassed the life of one. Elly goes to finish her fifth and final book, but unprecedentedly struggles with writer's block. She no longer knows what happens next, almost as if it has not happened yet. She soon learns that not everything is what it appears.

Elly goes on a mess of adventures and misunderstandings. She discovers that she is not who she really thinks she is. That the world written by her is not by design but is all too familiar as times go on. She meets various people who try to help her and learns that the people she thought she could trust are really the ones breaking the glimpse of reality right out of her sight. She begins to see her life mirrored with her titular character *Agent Argylle*.

The story goes all over the place in a sense that basically turns it into a knot. You can see how to untie it all, but then everything becomes a mess. There are twists left and right like a racecar track and this really just makes for poor writing and unexpressed development for the story we are presented with. Vaughn never really allows us to connect with the situation at hand and introduces us with a new one as if he is shoving food down our throats while we are still chewing.

What made his first spy film *Kingsman* so successful was the overall nature and pace of the characters and story. He allowed it to develop and unravel slowly with bits of satire mixed in. Although with *Argylle* he forces the satire too much and turns his whimsical journey into basically dumb fun. There are enjoyable moments based on the

characters and their ups and downs, but it is ultimately trifled by Vaughn's lack of straightforward writing and forced humor.

I give *Argylle* 2.5/5 stars because while a lot fell short, I still did somewhat enjoy my time viewing it. Like his previous movies, Vaughn uses music, color and costumes to enhance his story. He did succeed with this, but after enduring everything else, all these great additions to the story were an afterthought. I would definitely see it as a popular streaming service option in the upcoming months. For those who just love simple action and comedy, this is the film for you. For someone that came in with expectations given Vaughn's previous films, I was left wanting more and wished a lot was left out.



Photo courtesy of Universal Pictures

OSCAR NOMINATIONS CREATE MIXED FEELINGS

KESHAWN ALLEN
Contributing Writer

Ever since the Academy for Motion Picture Art and Science released this year's nominations, there has been nothing but mixed reviews about what has been nominated. Throughout 2023, many films and documentaries were praised for their cinematography and performances. Some of the biggest movies, such as Barbie and Oppenheimer instantly became modern-day classics, and set a standard in cinematic history.

However, on the morning of Jan. 23rd, many were shocked by the announcement of the nominees for this year's The Academy Awards. A lot were surprised by the snubs received for certain actors who played specific roles, while others were praised for their roles. Many professors here at UWG had mixed emotions about this year's Oscar nominations.

This year, nine films are nominated for best picture. American Fiction, Barbie, Oppenheimer, Past Lives and Poor Things are some of the biggest

movies that were nominated. A lot of these films tackled serious subject matter such as loss, gender equality, harmful stereotypes and murder. The responses to the movies nominated for Best Picture were greatly appreciated online, with many being biased over a few movies.

When asked about the films in the Best Picture category, screenwriting and creative writing, Professor Alison Umminger did not shy away from her takes on some of the nominated films.

"An embarrassment of riches," said Umminger, stating that the Academy nominated all great films, but sadly, only one film can be crowned Best Picture.

Umminger explained that they should make their decision on whether or not the film tells a good story and if it pops. She also mentions the likelihood of Oppenheimer taking home the trophy for Best Picture, saying that

it was a "Brilliantly done movie."

Other professors, such as Film and Screenwriting professor Deon Kay, expressed his thoughts on some of the year's nominations. When asked if he had seen any of the films nominated, Kay said that the two personal films nominated were Poor Things and Anatomy of The Fall. He complimented these two for their cinematography and bold storytelling.

"Poor Things has an element of social radicalism and also pushed the boundary of filmmaking," said Kay. "To do that in a commercial environment is challenging but also interesting to do and see. It's not flashy, not wild. Just incredibly human."

With the upcoming Oscars in early March this year, many conversations and opinions are still being expressed online through social media platforms. People have taken to X, formerly known as Twitter, to express outrage about a certain actress. Margot Robbie was not nominated for her leading role in Barbie despite the fact the film gained two supporting nominations. This sparked controversy because of the feminist message of the film. This lack of nominations did not shine a good light on the Academy and resulted in disappointment from many viewers.

KEVIN HART SHINES AS MASTER ART THIEF IN "LIFT"

CINDY MARTINEZ
Contributing Writer

Kevin Hart is known throughout Hollywood for his comedic persona, which made him the perfect fit for the role of Cyrus Whitaker in the Comedy Action film "Lift." Cyrus, an internationally known art thief, makes his money illegally by going to art auctions and buying expensive art pieces using money he made from art resales on the Black Market. The action-heist-filled movie was directed by F. Gary Gray and written by Daniel Kunka. It was released on Jan. 12.

The film "Lift" held the number seven spot at the top of Netflix's trending films. It also had over 36.7 million views, landing it in the Top 10 in over 93 countries since its release in early January. The movie had a production budget of 100 million dollars, which was evident in its luxurious settings across Europe, including Venice and Tuscany. The opening scene

starts in Venice with a high-speed boating chase after Cyrus steals an NFT-valued art piece by artist N8, setting off a chain reaction for a film filled with adventure and laughs.

Cyrus and his team are a task force known for stealing famous pieces of art and operating these art heists illegally. He is infamous among government agencies like Interpol and the CIA for stealing prestigious pieces of art. However, as much as Interpol tries to stop him, Cyrus cannot be caught in the act of his heists. Interpol agent Abby is sent by her boss to recruit Cyrus and his team for a mission to help them steal a transport of gold from a dangerous criminal. In return for Cyrus's help, Abby promises to give Cyrus and his team a clean slate with no charges against them. However, Cyrus knows his worth and is hesitant

at first but then complies with the mission to recover tons of gold from the enemy, "Leviathan."

The newly found partnership then sets out to carry out its mission, but along the way, they run into someone they never expected:

someone who embodies the adage "keep your friends close and your enemies closer." With this obstacle now in the way, the team must find a way to rise above all odds.

In appreciation for the opportunity to play Cyrus Whitaker, according to a Netflix interview, Hart said, "Taking on the role of an action hero and heist boss like Cyrus has been a non-stop thrill ride for me. Teaming up with F. Gary Gray, who has directed some of my all-time favorite action movies, and working with this unbelievable ensemble cast in the most incredible locations elevated the whole experience to another level."

The film takes audiences on a journey of laughs, witty jokes, betrayal, heroism and more. It will leave the viewers on edge about the destiny of these characters if all odds turn against them in the dangerous world filled with action.