

Percent for Art program shaped UWO landscape over 20 years

by Mandy Potts - Friday, September 16, 2011

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The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's newest academic building, Sage Hall, is among the last buildings in the state to receive a public art piece under a more than 30-year-old program that has ended.

The program – Percent for Art – was repealed and ended July 1 after supporting hundreds of art work installations throughout the state, including more than 20 at UW Oshkosh. The last Percent for Art piece will be installed in the courtyard of Sage Hall.

Wisconsin's Percent for Art Program was established in 1980 for the purpose of placing artwork in public settings, helping to beautify public buildings and urban environments, as well as to draw attention to the wealth of artistic experiences in the region. Through the program, artists were selected by a committee and then commissioned through the Wisconsin Arts Board.

“Of course, the most important benefit of Percent for the Arts projects is the work itself. Designed to withstand the test of time, these works inhabit the buildings and their surroundings for years, introducing subsequent generations of students, faculty, employees and the public to artwork that they may not have experienced otherwise,” said Edwin Jager, associate art professor and department chair at UW Oshkosh.

The metal sculpture that will circle a tree in the Sage Hall inner courtyard is expected to be completed soon. The piece was designed by Bennie/Cridler Studio, out of Mazomanie, Wis. Artist Kim Crider is a metalworker who was featured as an artist-in-residence at the Paine Art Center and Gardens in 2006.

Under the legislation for the Percent for Art program, two-tenths of one percent of the total construction budget for selected new state buildings or renovation projects was designated for the commission or purchase of artwork. Only state buildings with a high degree of public access were eligible, making UW Oshkosh and other universities a prime location for such pieces.

Throughout the UW Oshkosh campus, popular pieces like Spark outside Halsey Hall, the fire place at Reeve Union and FLOW outside of the Student Recreation and Wellness Center help to beautify and define the University. Many other works of art, like paintings and stained glass, are also visible inside many buildings on campus.

“Setting aside a small percentage of a building's budget for artistic works adds value to the building far beyond the monetary cost. The process of selecting works for buildings always brings together a diverse and talented group of people who represent artistic communities, administration, students and the public,” Jager said.

Gail Panske, art professor at UW Oshkosh, who sat on the review committee when Spark was brought to campus in 2004 said she thought being involved with the process of bringing a concept to fruition was both interesting and impactful for her, as well as a benefit to the University.

“I believe that having the fine and performing arts as part of our community, our lives, is paramount to living in a civil society. The Percent for Art program was a small but vital part of bringing visual art into public spaces,” she said. “Without it, we all lose.”

A glimpse of Percent for Art projects at UW Oshkosh:

Learn more:

- [Wisconsin Arts Board - Percent for Art](#)

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