

Have Art, Will Travel

Local artist Joe Dimino spreads his artwork around the world in lifelong exhibit

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Throughout the world, a strange phenomenon is evolving. Small, brightly-colored, VanGogh-like paintings are showing up in unexpected places-at the foot of a fountain in Italy, on a rumpled bed in an Omaha hotel room, on a park bench in Tampa. Strangers are sometimes seen making the creative deliveries, carefully setting works of art that they carried with them in their travels in unusual places and foreign lands. And as the artwork passes hands to another stranger, who finds the painting by chance while strolling through a park, the new owner finds a Midwestern name and contact information on the back of the canvass: Painting by Joe Dimino: www.joedimino.com



An avid painter since 1998, local artist Joe Dimino decided early last year that many of his paintings needed to "just get out there" instead of sitting in plastic bins in his basement.

"I started thinking-I'm going to pass out all these paintings," said Dimino. "Too many of these have been sitting in the dark for too long."

To that aim, Dimino started the makings of a "lifelong traveling exhibit" in January of 2007. He took his original artwork and began giving it away through a series of "drop-off" encounters arranged with the help of friends and other people participating in the exhibit.

Increasingly aided by people he met through internet sites like "Craig's List" or by word-of-mouth, Dimino has managed to get his artwork in the hands of businesses and individuals in Great Britain, Italy, and Australia, in addition to locations throughout the United States. A map on his website shows the sites where his work has been "dropped off" as well as some future drop locations.

Also on his website, Dimino posts video footage of the remote exhibits and their drop-offs. He also receives feedback from the people who help him, and from those who find his artwork. One Girl Scout troop leader acquired some works and carried them with her during her travels throughout Ireland. Another one of Dimino's friends has taken works

with her to Bali. And Dimino himself, who admits he does not travel far from Grandview very often, even rolled a painting up in a bottle and threw it into the ocean during a thunderstorm on the beaches of Tampa, Florida.

The project plays out what Dimino finds most important in his art --an ability to make people around the world interact and connect with others. The traveling exhibit, he says, lends itself to enormous possibilities where a painter, a person presenting the artwork, and a person accepting a piece, all play into a multi-layered narrative of life and the creative process unfolding.

"The really cool thing is when you bring creativity to people, you let them into a story," said Dimino.

A Grandview Middle School student wove himself into a recent piece of art, when he responded to one of Dimino's artworks left on a local park bench. The student approached Dimino and said, 'Hey I found one of your pieces of artwork, I'm going to drop it off in San Diego when I go there this summer.'

"Anybody trustworthy and willing enough to handle the package can do it," said Dimino, who had started by making donations himself at places like the Sprint Store, Elbow Bend, and Cerner Corporation in North Kansas City. "This project will never end. I'll pass this on to my kids and legions of story-makers."

Recently Dimino said he's been taking some downtime from a very busy and productive past year where he painted everyday and sometimes completed several paintings a day. He continues to draw inspiration from many facets of his interest, like ideological wars, politics, nature's beauty, classical art, poetry, music and video.

Dimino said his most productive time is early in the morning before the day takes over. Besides making a point to stay on top of current events, he carries other daily obligations including working full time with the Grandview School District where he trains teachers on software and serves as webmaster. He and his wife Carrie have two sons, three year-old Miles, and ten year-old Zen.

"The traveling exhibit still continues to evolve. It will come at mysterious places around town if you keep your eyes open," remarked Dimino.

For more information, or to become a part of the story, contact Joe at www.joedimino.com