



Hundred-day art project ends; focus was on creativity

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MARQUETTE - The Community 100DayProject is over, but it is hoped the creative aftereffects linger.

Participants, or "arters," were to take part in a small daily artistic act for 100 consecutive days, beginning in January and ending April 30. Arters' work was on display May 17 at the Ore Dock Brewing Company.

Marquette ceramist Ann Russ, with help from Catherine Benda, spearheaded the project similar to a previous 100DayProject in which artists, whose work was displayed at the city of Marquette Arts and Culture Center, took part with works of their own.

"Really, the 100DayProject is a framework for people for committing to a daily practice, every day, for 100 consecutive days," Russ said. "That's a long time."

The project wasn't about making a masterpiece.

"It's not about creating perfect art," Russ pointed out. "It's developing creativity."

The daily activity also was to allow people to experiment without a lot of pressure, and even develop an artistic habit, she said.

Russ said the original 100DayProject show fired up the subsequent participants.

"I think they saw the potential of what could be possible for themselves through that exhibit," she said.

Russ said 165 people registered for the Community 100DayProject, coming from 14 Upper Peninsula communities, five other states and as far away as Tanzania and Guatemala.

Russ said the project helped people get through a long winter, and also made shifts in how they see themselves and in their relationship to the community.

The effort was coordinated so everybody started and ended the same days. However, although the begin and end dates were the same, the projects ranged from making jewelry to working with fabric to recording Marquette sounds, including ice cracking on Lake Superior.

Since the project's conclusion, Russ has been collecting "impact stories" from the arters.

Judy Parlato said the 100DayProject helped rein in her ADHD artistic process.

"For the first time ever I kept my projects simply focused on one thing - poppies," Parlato said.

Jenny Engstrom said that after each session at her art table, she became more focused and less stressed, allowing her to deal with issues more effectively.

Fred Potter noted he developed as a photographer and a person.

"I take more chances photographically and personally," he said. "As an example, I now teach a camera class at a local camera store and enjoy very much seeing the excitement others gain from learning more about their interest in photography."

Cindy Deo said the activity taught her the value of time management, while Nancy Sullivan said it forced her to trust her own artistic sense.

"Having gone through the 100 days, I now have more confidence about painting," Susan Sheridan said. "I realize that I tend to get discouraged at the middle stage of a painting, but that with more time on it, it starts to come together, so I just need to tell myself to keep at it and be patient."

Russ said support groups even sprung up throughout the process.

"I think people really bonded through the shared experience," she said.

Penney Mellen said she discovered the project acted as a point of contact with other people.

"I enjoyed the process of letting the forms emerge," she said. "They made me think about how we all see things differently and how glad I am that we do."

Russ said another Community 100DayProject is a probability, with the potential to be a regional event.

"I think there's interest there," she said. "There's enthusiasm."

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