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Crean Lutheran artists: From classroom to gallery

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Crean Lutheran High School operates with the mission of “proclaiming Jesus Christ through excellence in education.” With that in mind, the visual arts department, like many of the other disciplines, has adopted a specific Bible verse as inspiration for its instruction.

Genesis 1:27 reads, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” For a recent assignment, teachers **Anna Bloomfield** and **Leah Jaeger** asked their students to create artwork to go along with this passage.

Some chose to make art depicting the literal image of God as they imagine it, while others interpreted the prompt more abstractly.

“This gives the students a chance to explore how God is creative,” said Bloomfield. “And since we are made in his image, we are creative also.”

After completing their work, select students were invited to display their art in an off-campus exhibit at the John and Linda Friend Art Gallery at Concordia University Irvine. The show, “In His Image: Created to Create,” is on display through Jan. 17 and features a range of art mediums, including photography, painting and sculpture.

The students, who do not have a space on campus where they can publicly present their projects, said the opportunity to show their work in a gallery setting made the whole process more exciting and significant.

“As much as I love doing the art, to see your work in a gallery brings a different feeling,” said senior **Madison Strasmann**.

Senior **Isabel Hans** agreed. “I was excited to see (my art) in a glass case with a title and everything. It’s encouraging and gives me something to strive for.”

The students attended an opening reception for their exhibit Dec. 7, and for many, it was a first chance to see public reaction to their art.

“It was fun to see people going back and forth to my painting,” said senior **Zoe Zhou**. “I liked hearing people talk about it and try to understand it.”

Strasmann said she was nervous about showing her work to other people but felt reassured because of the professional presentation.

“I think younger people tend to get overlooked sometimes, but the fact that our work is in a gallery helps show what we can do,” she said.

The idea for the exhibit started with an invitation from **Niclas Kruger**, assistant professor of art at Concordia, which is also a Lutheran-affiliated school. Bloomfield said she jumped at the chance to have her students’ work seen not only by fellow classmates, but by college students, professors and the community.

“Art is meant to be seen,” said Bloomfield. “(The students) need to see that their work impacts the world around them.”

Thinking about the verse, the students said, helped them understand the connection between their artwork and the community that would see it.

“This is another way that we can go out and witness to the world and share our faith,” said Hans.

Senior **Amber Underwood**, who used a broken mirror to present a fractured image of the viewer, said she appreciated that the exhibit showed so many different interpretations of faith and “God’s perfect image.”

“We created works of art that show his purpose,” said Underwood. “And that makes me feel like I have a purpose to keep creating.”

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