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Student designs, paints downtown art

campus-news

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KOKOMO, Ind. – Every artist’s dream is for their work to be displayed and appreciated – and now all eyes are on Wes Plantenga’s art in downtown Kokomo.

Plantenga, a senior majoring in fine arts, created the four-panel mural featuring a silhouette of blue shapes over a neutral background that brings color and life to the Courthouse Square.

downtown_mural

Wes Plantenga talks about the new mural in downtown Kokomo.

A video of the project in progress can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/kTlb3h9O-Jg> (<http://youtu.be/kTlb3h9O-Jg>).

“It’s just a good design to have downtown and help bring some more life to the city,” Plantenga said of the blue swirls and shapes. “It doesn’t have a deep meaning. Really, it’s just something to look at. I like it a lot and I hope other people will.”

A year in the making, Gregory Steel, assistant professor of fine arts and new media, was approached by the city for some public art to be displayed on the outer wall of Dabrowski law office, located at the corner of Buckeye and Sycamore streets. Steel and colleague Minda Douglas, assistant professor of fine arts, decided to make this a class assignment. Plantenga’s work was selected.

“The students were asked to create a simple kind of graphic design,” Steel said. “We wanted a very strong design and wanted to be done in a few colors. This is part of what the city is doing to revitalize the downtown area. This is a good way for public art to be displayed.”

Plantenga sketched the design on the panels, and Douglas and a host of volunteers helped paint in the early mornings and in the evenings when shade was in their favor. About 30 hours was spent completing the mural.



“It’s a lot of work but it’s definitely worth it,” said Plantenga, a Kokomo resident. “This opportunity is awesome. I just got lucky. I’m surprised at how good it looks on this scale.”

Abstract art can be very appealing to the eye, and Douglas said this design works well in the downtown environment.

“I think what makes the design really strong is the use of positive and negative shapes. I think it keeps the eye moving and is a very interesting break up of space on the panels,” she said. “As you’re driving up you can see it from a block away. It is nice from a distance as well as close up.”

Both Steel and Douglas look forward to working with the city in other art projects, and providing more opportunities for students to display their work.

“This type of project allows student to see they can take their designs and turn them into some real that is appreciated,” Douglas said. “It’s good for the students, it’s good for the community, and it’s good for the city.”

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