

Accent

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'Eric McGehearty: Access Denied' now open at Piedmont Arts

EVENTS

LUNCH ON THE LAWN

Lunch on the Lawn from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday at the Historic Henry County Courthouse will feature live acoustic music by Matt Sweatt and Jacob Woodall. Lunch will be sold by local vendors. Call Martinsville Uptown for more information at 632-5688.

VIRGINIA NATURE

Army Corps of Engineers Park Rangers Danny and Susan Martin will present the program "Coyotes: The Newcomers" for the Reynolds Homestead "Virginia Nature Series" at 7 p.m. Thursday.

Coyotes were once a symbol of the American Southwest, but they are no longer strangers to the rest of the country. Their numbers are on the rise in every state.

There is no charge for admission, though donations to the

GOLF TOURNAMENT

The second annual God's Pit Crew benefit golf tournament will be held Friday at Glen Oaks Golf Club with tee times at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Prizes totaling \$1,700 will be awarded to the four teams with the lowest total scores. Lunch and dinner is provided for golfers and available for \$10 for guests. Four-man team entry fee is \$350. For information, contact Mike Newcomb at (434) 441-0289.

FARMERS' MARKET

The Uptown Martinsville Farmers' Market spotlights Apple Day, a Tasty Saturday, Saturday morning. Ten Brooks will begin with music at 9 a.m. Chef of the month Jessie Ward will give a demonstration at 10 a.m.

INDIAN FESTIVAL

The 23rd Annual Indian Festival will be held from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday (the gates will open at 11 a.m.) outside the Martinsville Middle School, at 201 Brown Street, in uptown Martinsville. Sponsored by the Virginia Museum of Natural History, the festival will feature drumming, dancing, weapons and lifestyle demonstrations, crafts and refreshments. One VMNH admission price provides access to both the festival and the new museum facility at 21 Starling Avenue. For more



What's exciting about this artist in particular is that his work allows us different ways to show (it).

Tina Sell

PAA director of exhibitions

Artist Eric McGehearty stands within the sculpture "Synapse," which represents "the electric connection in the mind," he said. The representation of books shown abstractly, makes the viewer wonder if words "get in the way of thought or create it." (Bulletin photos by Mike Wray)

A jumble of words

Exhibit tackles barriers to understanding

By HOLLY KOZELSKY
Bulletin Accent Editor



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WEDDING POLICY

If you are planning to announce your wedding or engagement in the Bulletin, please pick up a form from the Accent Department.

Completed forms and photographs must be returned by noon Wednesday for publication the following Sunday.

The Bulletin prefers to publish the wedding information and photograph within a month of the ceremony.

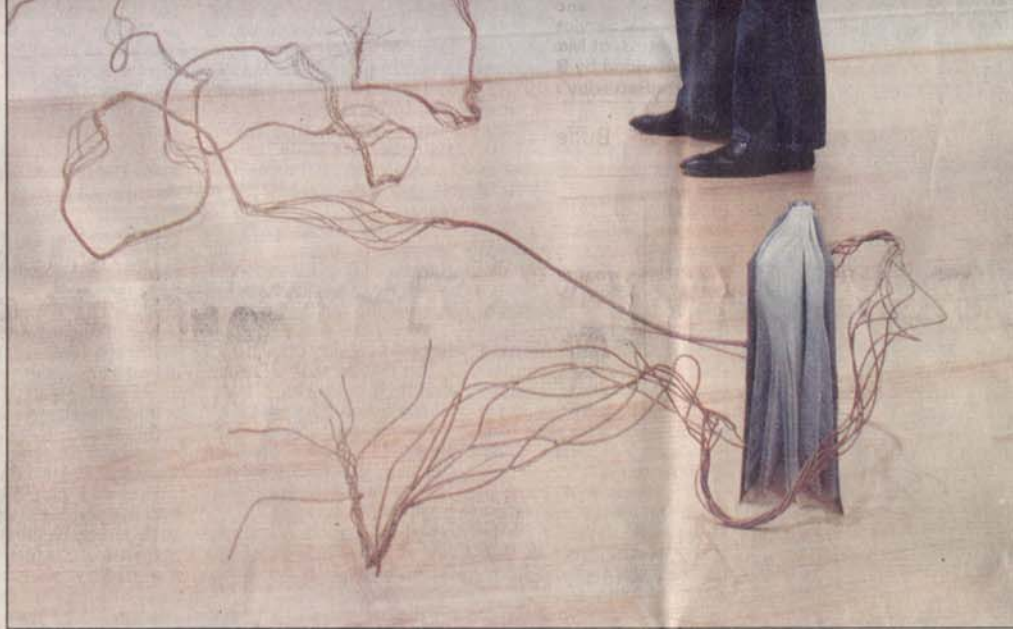
Black and white prints may be submitted with a wedding article. We reserve the right to reject photographs which will not reproduce properly. Photographs may be picked up after publication.

While the Bulletin makes every effort to ensure that no photographs are damaged, it cannot be responsible for any harm that may come to any photograph.

Birth announcement, anniversary and club note forms also are available.

Church announcements submitted by noon Wednesday will be printed in Friday's Church News section.

For more information, call the Accent department at 638-8801, extension 242.



Artist Eric McGehearty stands within the sculpture "Synapse," which represents "the electric connection in the mind," he said. The representation of books, shown abstractly, makes the viewer wonder if words "get in the way of thought or create it." (Bulletin photos by Mike Wray)



McGehearty stands with "Collision of a Fourth Grader," which has a desk crashed into a wall, legs bent. Inaccessible generic books are stuck in concrete blocks on the wall. Pencils are scattered on the floor. "You can sense the frustration" of someone unable to learn with the materials provided, said Director of Exhibits Tina Sell.

A jumble of words

Exhibit tackles barriers to understanding

By HOLLY KOZELSKY
Bulletin Accent Editor

To look at the new exhibit "Eric McGehearty: Access Denied" at Piedmont Arts, getting it is about not getting it.

The sculptures showing distorted or bound books and words are about "inaccessibility of the written word and texts," summed up Director of Exhibitions Tina Sell — "how language can represent humanity and communication."

"Synapse" shows books in reversed, clear images that curve out from the wall, among roiling tentacles of wire that extend into the room. The wire represents "the electrical connections in the mind — the spark between neurons that creates our thinking," artist Eric McGehearty said.

The artist said that the reverse-image books are there to make the viewer ponder, "Do they (books and words) get in the way of thought or create it?"

Nearby, spaced on the floor is a symmetrical field of books, each individually immersed in a cement block. Each book, encased in cement, is inaccessible, but the titles on the binders sticking out from the blocks are enticing, calling out to the passerby.

"What does that mean to anyone?" posed McGehearty, saying that the trapped books could represent censorship or a society without access to literature.

Contrasting with the heavy solidity of the steel and even the clunky books of other pieces is the clear, curvy "Thought Bubbles" that seem to float on the wall. The piece "is very ephemeral, like our own thoughts," he said — "a physical incarnation of my thoughts."



Close-up of 'Synapse'

While the exhibit may represent general confusion and inaccessibility of the written language, it all started for the artist from his experience with dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects the ability to read, McGehearty said. People with dyslexia experience it in different ways. He mentioned a common marker of dyslexia, confusion between the lower-case letters "b" and "d."

McGehearty said that he is "able to see perfectly," but the letters within the word "don't add up to a word. I have to put letters together individually" each time he reads, which makes reading slow and laborious, he said.

"To this day I haven't physically read a book," he said. Instead, he listens to

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IF YOU HAVE IDEAS FOR A FEATURE STORY, CALL THE ACCENT DEPARTMENT AT 638-8801.



Books encased in cement blocks suggest the limitations of learning disabilities, censorship or societies with low access to literature — “It’s up to you,” the viewer, to interpret, said the artist, Eric McGehearty. His exhibit, “Access Denied,” is on display at Piedmont Arts through Oct. 21. (Bulletin photo by Mike Wray)

Jumble —

(Continued from Page 1-B)

books on tapes and works with assistants who read to him.

He added that he was “really lucky” as a student because his parents advocated that he have appropriate accommodations which included books on tape and readers for tests. By the time he was in graduate school, though, he found it more difficult to get audio books. That’s when the idea to express his frustration in dyslexia through his art took hold.

He was doing sculptures “that dealt with frustration in a general sense. The professor asked what’s the deal with all this frustration,” he recalled. When he reluctantly explained to his professor that his feelings were caused by the difficulties of dyslexia, the professor suggested he get “more specific” with his artwork.

McGehearty said that he was excited to be able to show his work at Piedmont Arts. “When I walked into this place, it was just gorgeous ... I felt really great about how this (exhibit) was going to work in this place.” The museum recently was renovated; new floors are of ceramic tile downstairs and hardwood and carpet upstairs.

By being the sole exhibitor in the gallery, he is “getting to do some things that I haven’t done before with these pieces,” he said, so “the impact will be so much stronger” than when his works were exhibited in more limited spaces, he said.

Sell added, “What’s exciting about this artist in particular is that his work allows us different ways to show”: 3-dimensional works, 2-dimensional, projection and video. The video documentary will be shown in the museum’s new digital media room.

The artist has been in Martinsville for a week. He set up the lighting of his exhibit, a level of artist participation which is unusual, Sell said. He also conducted workshops at Patrick Henry Community College and area high schools.

“Eric McGehearty: Access Denied” will be on exhibit at Piedmont Arts through Oct. 21. More information on Eric McGehearty is available at www.ericmcgehearty.com.

Also on exhibit, in the Lynwood Artists’ Gallery, is a display of pottery and paintings by Shirley Cadmus. Her “clay pieces capture a very organic sort of shape that is recognizable and tactile (tempting to touch),” said Sell.

Piedmont Arts is located at 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday 1:30-4:30 p.m. There is no admission.

FROM THE NEWSROOM

'Access Denied' brings it all back

By HOLLY KOZELSKY
Bulletin Accent Editor

Do you remember ever sitting in the classroom, present in body but not in mind? Feeling detached, not part of what was going on?

I felt that when I was looking at the new exhibit at Piedmont Arts, *Access Denied* by Eric McGehearty. Though it seemed that I understood the message of the art during my whole visit, there were two particular moments it hit me like a ton of bricks.

The first was one of McGehearty's sculpture that showed a textbook locked into a steel grid. It made me think of my high school trigonometry textbook. The sculpture took me back to the those days when I skipped class a lot and didn't keep up with the work, so when I finally decided to catch up, the symbols and formulae in the book meant nothing to me.

I was hit by an amazing sense of déjà vu, though, when I stood before "Collision of a Fourth Grader," which is a school desk leaned up against a wall, shapes resembling anonymous books locked into cement and pencils scattered on the floor. It gave me that exact feeling of the frustration of just not "getting it" that I felt often throughout elementary school.

It all came back to me with clarity: sitting in the classroom, knowing that something was happening but not quite sure what. I never could see the board or the projection screen or anything the teacher ever held up.

I would just sit politely, pretending that I understood, and I always passed under the teacher's radar (i.e., didn't get in trouble). I knew how to look like a model student while I let the lessons wash over me, immersed, instead, into my own book of choice I hid inside the textbooks.

When I was in sixth grade I got my first pair of glasses. Oh!



Kozelsky

What a miracle! I could see the board and everything else! Until then, I never even had realized that the blackboard was actually meant to be seen. (Don't ask me why I thought teachers wrote on it.)

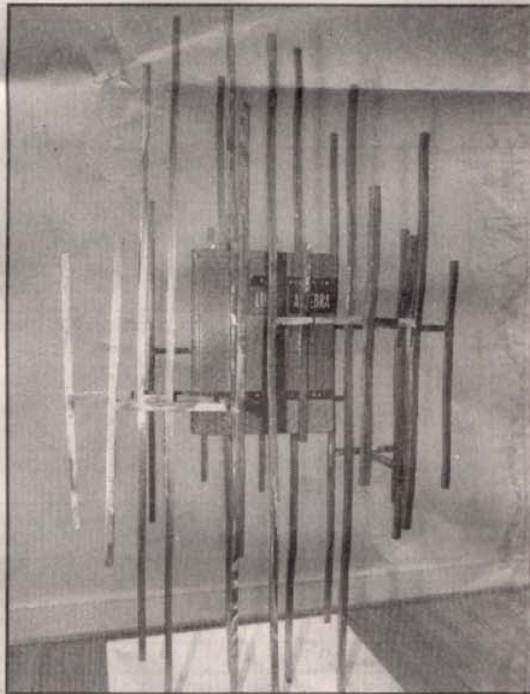
I had a chance later to go back to look through *Access Denied* with the artist himself. He explained to me that his works represent the frustration of words and language being inaccessible. He has dyslexia, a learning disability that affects the ability to read. It made reading books and traditional classroom learning out of his reach.

The frustration of dyslexia "is where I start the work, but it's not necessarily what the work is about," he said.

That makes sense, because this exhibit at Piedmont Arts, just like art in general, is as much or more about what the viewer's reaction is based on his or her own experience as about the artist's intent.

All of his sculptures evoked strong emotions in me. They made me think about kids in school and how easy it is to assume that they are doing fine without realizing that they may feel stumped.

But it was one thing to empathize — to see the works



Have you ever felt this way about the material in a textbook? Eric McGehearty's exhibit, *Access Denied*, explores the frustration of learning that's hard to get to. (Bulletin photo by Mike Wray)

and imagine what other people must feel.

It was quite another to reach those two sculptures that brought my own experiences crashing back to me. (That is sympathy, when you can relate because you've been there yourself.)

It's powerful to be drawn into art. You can merely understand it, or, a step deeper, it can be about you.

In fact, I probably even shouldn't have mentioned my reactions to it, because yours will be quite different — perfectly unique, your very own.

I bet Eric McGehearty didn't have a kid needing glasses in mind when he created his works. Or the kid who fell so behind on classwork that it came to make no sense ... or whatever moments of frustration that you had in school.

Or did he?

It's all in there, all different according to who we are.