

Traveling exhibit 'Environmental Impact' showcased at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

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"Environmental Impact" is a traveling exhibit that is currently on display at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, having opened to the public on Feb. 21.

David Wagner, Ph.D, is the curator for the event, and was responsible for selecting the artists' work.

"There were two groups," Wagner said. "I've been working with a lot of the artists for years, and I knew their work. The other group was made up of artists I found along the way."

Wagner brought many of these artists together for their edgy work.

"I knew that they had dealt with difficult subject matter," Wagner said. "Their treatment of [of difficult subject matter] is beautiful, and I've always wanted to take that work and put it into a show; to be a show of our time. If global warming isn't of our time, then what is?"

Wagner is an established figure in management of museum exhibitions and traveling exhibits. "Environmental Impact" has already traveled to three different venues and will continue to tour throughout the country for three years.

"I really want to take this exhibit to the west coast states," Wagner said. "This exhibit is mainly in the north eastern sector of the United States, and it's a project that I'd like to take west-ward."

Two of the artists that Wagner knew previous to the exhibition were Rick Pas and Michael Meilham.

"I knew of their work, and I wanted to make a statement of our time," Wagner said.

Pas is a Michigan artist who works in the realm of contemporary realism. Pas' works featured in this exhibition are created from a combination of photography and computer generation. His works contain several different photographs, which were all brought into one finished work. He manipulates the photographs through computer generation to complete a singular visual frame.

Meilham is a sculptural artist, and works primarily with blown glass. However, he is also a corn farmer from Oshkosh, Wis.

"How many artists do you find in the edgy, contemporary avant-garde show who are farmers?" Wagner said. "He's amazing."

In this exhibition, Meilham worked with blown

glass corn moldings that dangle from the ceiling of the exhibit hall by half-inch ropes. Along the ropes are copper attachments that resemble interconnected leaves. The glass ears of corn, however, are embedded with glass spheres of all different colors, and even a die. His work reflects the addition of hybridization and genetic engineering of crops.

"The other group [of artists] was made up of artists that I found along the way," said Wagner. "I found a lot of [the artists] on the Internet, but also largely through my contacts."

Several of them were featured in the Catherine Clark Gallery in San Francisco, which featured artists from around the country.

"I wouldn't have known about them in the midwest," Wagner said.

Sayaka Ganz is one of the artists Wagner found along the way. Ganz was born in Japan, and moved around to Brazil and Hong Kong. She lives in Indiana now, creating art inspired by her roots in Shinto-Japanese culture. Ganz's work is made up of common white plastic items found around thrift shops. They all come together to create a family of polar bears



From the Premiere of Environmental Impact at the Canton Museum of Art, Michael Meilham's sculptural work depicting the genetic engineering of corn.

suspended from the ceiling. This shows the beauty of the combination of these common items, and is intended to parallel the natural ma-

jestic beauty of a polar bear flowing through the water.

"Environmental Impact" will be open to the public until May 4.