
U. alumnus features song-inspired art gallery

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University students have the opportunity from now until March 10 to visit Mason Gross School of the Arts alumnus Dennis Dalelio's artwork at the Alfa Art Gallery on Church Street in downtown New Brunswick.

The artist, who graduated from the University in 1998, said his artwork for the gallery's "Three Years of Song" exhibition was inspired by his own music.

"I just started making songs — my son would bang on a drum or be in the background of the song and my wife would sing along with me," Dalelio said. "It was basically an audio journal of our life as a family as well as my responses to the world."

Dalelio said his exhibit incorporated his as well as his wife and son's emotions.

"My goal when my first son was born was to create something every day just to keep making artwork and also to involve my wife and my son in a way in my artwork," he said.

Every day for a year, Dalelio said he wrote songs that were inspired by his everyday life and his love for indie rock music.

"[The songs would be about] anything from world news to local happenings to situations with family or friends, I'd sing about," he said.

After he wrote his songs, Dalelio said he spent another two years illustrating them, first making small drawings inspired by the contents of his songs, then transferring the drawings onto larger scrolls and finally transforming his drawings and ideas into the large paintings featured at the exhibition.

Alfa Art Gallery curator Jewel Lim said Dalelio's artwork, which features objects hanging from

the wall alongside unframed painted canvases, gives off an almost surreal effect.

"It's like they are suspended in time. The works are keeping the essence of the people who used them," Lim said. "[Dalelio] makes art a tangible and binding part of the home."

In addition to using traditional artistic media such as ink and acrylic paint, Dalelio said he likes to add nontraditional materials like old clothing, dirt, doors and rust from water filters to illuminate his artwork's abstract and historical qualities.

"A lot of the stuff [household objects used in the exhibition] had history from my own life," he said. "I used a blanket from the years I was a bachelor. A lot of the clothing was clothing from my wife's grandparents who both passed away, so it's kind of like keeping a family history embedded in the artwork even in the materials I was using."

Another major influence of Dalelio's artwork was his son, whose childhood scribbles and drawings served as the foundational lines for his own artwork, Dalelio said.

The Alfa Art Gallery, which celebrates its three-year anniversary on March 11, exhibits all types of art but focuses, in large part, on multidisciplinary art, said Galina Kourteva, the assistant director at the gallery. For Dalelio's exhibition, viewers were attracted to his unique approach to art.

"We were looking for something more experimental, something that fits our multidisciplinary approach," Kourteva said. "In this case, Dennis was a pretty interesting artist. He first wrote the songs and then he went back and based off the songs, he drew the paintings."

Kourteva described Dalelio's artwork as unique and distinct from those she has seen before and encourages everyone, including students, to visit "Three Years of Song."

"It's kind of an unusual approach from traditional fine arts artists," she said.

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