

ART OF THE AGES

Gallery celebrates 50-plus years of James Kearns' work

By Madeleine Johnson

This school year has seen a rather enjoyable trend in the Rider University Art Gallery. The campus population has been presented with an endless parade of visually stunning and intellectually challenging pieces, and the gallery's current exhibit is no exception.

James Kearns' collection of work, "Continuities: Fifty+ Years" mixes oil paintings with masterful crayon application, wry humor with quiet honesty and the frightfully fantastic with the vulnerably human. All of the elements that comprise this collection of selected works come together to create a successful and surreal celebration of a self-taught artist's triumph.

At a gallery talk presented to the public on Thursday, Feb. 2, Kearns carefully dismantled all stereotypes one may expect from an accomplished artist while regaling his audience with amusingly anecdotal stories of

his past. Kearns has no problem presenting himself as an ordinary man who just happens to paint in his free time, answering questions about what a painting's deeper meaning is with "I don't know — you tell me!"

Harry I. Naar, a Fine Arts Department professor and the director of Rider's art gallery, has an arsenal of reasons behind why he chose Kearns' art for the gallery. Along with a teaching stint at the School of Visual Arts, Naar was also impressed with how long Kearns has been contributing to the art world and feels that "it's important to bring forth artists, especially New Jersey artists."

The intensity and vivacity found in Kearns' work was another point that appealed to Naar.

"[Kearns] presents images that are beyond the ordinary," Naar said. "[The works] are very proactive in terms of subject matter and the way they're painted. When you look at the

image, the people depicted are always doing something that makes the viewer think about what's going on."

Kearns himself recognizes that his art is teeming with life. At his artist reception he explained his reasoning: "Since I can't paint the entire universe at once, I can always imply it with people coming out from the frame on all sides."

What is perhaps the most unavoidable theme in Kearns' art is how brutally he constructs his human images. The people encapsulated in these paintings defy all conventional conceptions of beauty, as Kearns instead embraces an aesthetic appeal that transcends the tradition of physical allure.

"His work pushes the realm of picture-making beyond the superficial," Naar said.

While Kearns stresses that the viewer determines what a piece really means, his personality and perspectives shine through, echoing his proclama-



Photo by Stephanie Nardi

Freshman Stephanie Harris examines a painting by James Kearns, whose work will be on display until Thursday, Feb. 23.

tion of "to say art is complicated is to trifle with words." Kearns creates truly complex artworks that boggle the mind while treating the eye to a whirlwind of otherworldly colors.

James Kearns' exhibit, "Continuities: Fifty+ Years," showcases the artist's drawings and paintings. It opened on

Thursday, Jan. 26 and will be on display in the Rider University Art Gallery until Thursday, Feb. 23. The art gallery's hours are 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from noon until 4 p.m. on Sundays.

'Cousin Jeff' rallies next generation to get involved

By Lacey Korevec

The audience clapped and cheered in agreement with Jeffrey "Cousin Jeff" Johnson as he explained that black history should be studied throughout the year rather than just one month, and the group of more than 40 listeners needs to stand up and do something about it.

Johnson, who is the host and producer of the show *The Cousin Jeff Chronicles*, also serves as an activist, a minister and a public speaker. He came to Rider's Bart Luedeke Center Theater on Wednesday, Feb. 1, to speak at the Opening Ceremony of the campus' Black History Month events and to help mend the gap between today's generation and the one that protested on Capitol Hill many years ago during the Civil Rights Movement.

The Black Student Union sponsored the event. Many of its members listened intently as Johnson told how the Civil Rights Movement is unique compared to other "modern world movements" because it demanded and received changes in legislation.

"It's one thing to make people feel bad," he said. "It's another thing to make them change their laws, so that anybody that does it after that can be arrested, can be fired, can be removed, can be put in jail."

The hip-hop community is not doing enough, according to Johnson. Members are proud of their substantial incomes, but fail to

recognize the effects their financial achievements have on the black community as a whole.

"Hip-hop is now in a place where it has genius, but it doesn't have dedication," he said. "It has creativity, but it doesn't have focus."

Johnson also highlighted the differences between hip-hop artists today and the civil rights activists of yesterday.

"We come from a generation that, for the most part, believes, 'Somebody else needs to fix that,'" he said. "The Civil Rights generation understood the connectivity between anger and responsibility."

In the past year, the world has lost many important black leaders, including Rosa Parks, who died on Monday, Oct. 24, and Coretta Scott King, who passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 31, he said.

"Who is going to replace them?" Johnson asked. "50 Cent? We have now minimized our culture to sound bites and T-shirts."

Hip-hop and the Civil Rights Movement need to be bridged through communication. There is a "clear division," Johnson said. But it is one that can be erased.

"What is this generation's responsibility — to connect with their elders so that they would be able to understand the sacrifice that was made, that we would be able to have a real movement of our own," he said. "That is how we begin to bridge the gaps."

Toward the end of the event, Johnson offered the audience a choice.

"The only question is: What will you do with your hands? Will you sit on them and ignore what you've been given?" he asked. "Will you fail to build? Will you fail to grow? Will you take your hands and build families that will ultimately build communities that will ultimately build a nation that's about humanity and not just about money?"

Additional reporting by Cara Latham

Q&A: Who is your ideal Valentine and why?

By Olivia Tattory

Photos By Stephanie Nardi



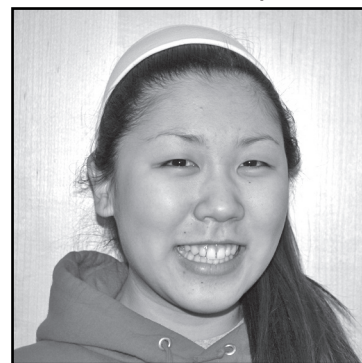
"Angelina Jolie because she has sexy lips and eyes and is perfect."

— Jeremy Finkelson-Reece
Sophomore



"My girlfriend because if I don't say that I will get in trouble."

— Brian Halle
Freshman



"Eli Manning because he knows how to score."

— Suzie Chu
Freshman



"Ryan Dick because he sends me Christmas cards at home."

— Aileen Ascolese
Senior