



Independent/Barrett Stinson

Learning from a professional at work, (from right) Stuhr Museum Curator of Exhibits Kari Stofer watches with Betty Carlson of North Loup, Laurie Sheffield of Grand Island, Maggie McCready of Hastings (behind Sheffield) and Deb Beck of Clarks Wednesday afternoon as nationally known artist Todd Williams (left) conducts a plein air art workshop at Stuhr Museum. Beck grew up with Williams in Central City.

Stuhr hosts plein air artist for workshop

By Denton Cushing
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With temperatures in the 70s on Wednesday, an artist couldn't have painted a lovelier day to be out in the open air.

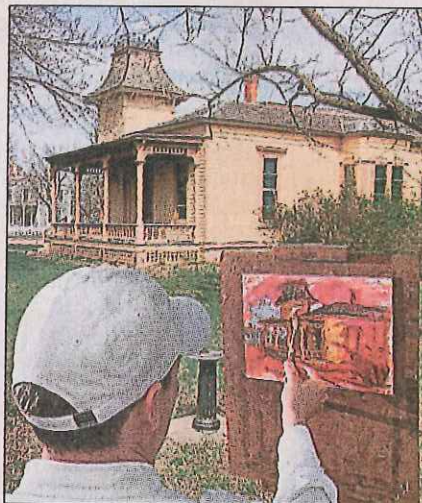
As part of the "Wings Over the Platte" art show, Stuhr Museum brought plein air artist Todd Williams to the grounds for a demonstration.

"For our 'Wings over the Platte,' we like to do different programs, and we met Todd Williams right before Christmas and asked him if he wanted to do a program out here," Curator of Exhibits Kari Stofer said. "His style is turn-of-the-last-century, so it's right around the time frame we have here in Railroad Town."

Plein air is a French term short for "en plein air," meaning "in the open air," and is related to painting outdoors.

"I absolutely felt very honored to be asked to come out here and really want to come back and do this again," Williams said. "I feel very honored to be able to come and paint here on location."

Williams, a Central City native, presented a slide show to begin the workshop and talked about "Seven Keys of Unlocking a Great Painting" and "Divine Design," which he said is the mathematical ratio in nature used for design.



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Nationally known artist Todd Williams conducts a plein air art workshop at Stuhr Museum on Wednesday afternoon as he paints the Lesher House in Railroad Town.

and hopefully, we can get him back in the fall or the spring for a full workshop where people can bring their paints out and he can instruct more than demonstrate," Stofer said on Wednesday. "He talked a lot about the seven keys and how they can transfer to any medium."

"I went on the Internet and saw his winter scenes, and so I just got interested in it and have always liked painting, and I thought I needed to

so I am here to learn what I can, and hopefully I can start painting."

The subject matter of choice for Williams was the yellow and brown Lesher House.

"I chose this location based on the light and time of day because I was somewhat limited on time to look for a different subject, and I had seen this house and really loved the tower part," Williams explained. "For me, it's all about the light and what it's doing at the time. It is really exciting visually with some of the light and dark shadows that are taking place."

Stofer said she was impressed because he basically followed what he said: The artist starts out thin and builds from there.

"I like that he had a drawing aspect to begin with and is going to build it kind of like a sculpture," she said.

"The painting he is doing today is fabulous," Beck said on Wednesday. "I love old houses. It's a really neat, unusual structure. I have never seen a painting like this start, and it's just fun to watch it come together."

Williams said the "Seven Keys of Unlocking a Great Painting" are like separating the science of painting, which is the left part of the brain, from the creative side, which is the right part of the brain.

He added, "Painting in its simplest terms is mixing the correct value and correct color and placing

ARTIST: Workshop held at Stuhr Museum

Continued from 1-A

"He is a very good teacher, so I think with what I have now in just three quarters of a day, I know enough to start on my own," Beck said. "I was surprised he uses his knife as much as he does instead of a brush and was surprised he looked through a viewer."

"I think bringing Todd out here means that we can provide a still and ongoing service for the community and build upon that," Stofer said.

"The museum used to have a lot of artists that came out here. Grand Island's history is full of artists. Some of the earliest settlers were very very into art. I think that it's important for the museum to keep that tradition and conversation alive."

Aside from the workshop at Stuhr Museum, Williams will soon be embarking on a project called "Painting the Legacy of Nebraska."

An appreciation dinner for

donors to his project will be on Saturday at the Merrick County Venture Center in Central City, with social time beginning at 6 p.m., a meal at 6:30 and presentation at 7.

"I am doing an entire series throughout the state of

Nebraska where I am going to each of the 93 counties and doing a painting in each," Williams said.

"Any donations given by individuals or businesses will actually be a credit toward acquiring one of the paint-

ings from the series."

For more information about Williams, visit www.toddwilliamsfineart.com. For more information about the appreciation dinner, call the Merrick Foundation at (308) 946-3707.