
HCC art gallery debuts ‘Human Erratics’ installation

HOLYOKE – The campus of Holyoke Community College and the woods around it, like many places in western Massachusetts, are marked by occasional, enormous boulders called “erratics,” giant rocks left in seemingly random locations by glaciers as they receded at the end of the last Ice Age.

“Human Erratics” is the title of a new installation at HCC’s Taber Art Gallery that takes its name from a short film by artist Marie Lynn Haas. The film, composed entirely of still images, explores what she calls “wastescapes” - deserted buildings and dumpsites, in her hometown of Worthington.

“Like glacial erratics, left behind by the movement of ice across long distances, wastescape structures mark the path of human movement,” she explains in a note that accompanies the exhibition, which opened Sept. 3 with the start of the fall semester and runs through Friday, Oct. 18. “They are, in a sense, human erratics, deposits of human abandonment

and remnants of neglect.”

“Human Erratics,” the show, includes four short film projects created by Haas and her artistic collaborator Tori Lawrence, residency director and founder of Atland, an artists’ retreat in West Chesterfield, where Haas is also a curator.

The gallery, located inside the HCC Library on the second floor of the Donahue Building, will host an opening reception for “Human Erratics” on Thursday, Sept. 12, from 5-7 p.m. that includes an informal meet-and-greet with the artists.

According to Rachel Rushing, Taber Art Gallery director, the films and the exhibition itself are really a collaboration of the many artists who comprise the Tori Lawrence and Co. group, which is made up of dancers, musicians, builders, and other artists.

“They all work together on each other’s projects,” said Rushing, “such as these short films and the installations.”

Each film in the show runs on a continuous loop and is meant to be experienced in a different way.

Also part of the installation is a book of Haas’s photographs titled “Wastescapes,” along with two empty journals that invite visitors to contribute their own thoughts and drawings.

“These works explore personal and collective turmoil and reveal how chronic illness and the cycles of life and death are woven into the fabric of ecological change,” reads a note that accompanies the exhibit.

The films run from five to 15 minutes. None have narration or a typical storyline, so they don’t have to be watched from beginning to end to be appreciated in the context of the show.

The Taber Art Gallery, located off the lobby of the HCC Library on the second floor of the HCC Donahue Building, is free and open to the public Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during regular school sessions.