Experience the arts
Hillard hosts weekly art programs, gives sneak peak into exhibits

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Every Wednesday at 6 p.m., during both fall and spring semesters, the Paul and Lulu Hilliard Art Museum offers various programs, including: workshops, lectures, panel discussions, performances, film screenings, readings and book signings.

“We aim to offer a diverse range of programs that will allow people to connect to the content of our exhibitions and collection in myriad ways,” said LouAnne Greenwald, museum director.

Last Wednesday evening’s workshop was called “Mapping the Spirit of Place.” This workshop went hand-in-hand with the seasonal theme of the museum “Politics and Place.”

The workshop began with a warm applause and the introduction of the presenter, Paddy Bowman.

According to the university website, “Paddy Bowman is director of Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education and co-editor of the Journal of Folklore and Education. She has developed many folk arts education resources, including the online guide Louisiana Voices.

“She received a master’s in folklore from the University of North Carolina and was awarded the American Folklore Society’s Benjamin A. Botkin Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Public Folklore and is a Fellow of the Society,” the site said.

This workshop focused on folk art, in preparation for an exhibit coming to the museum, called “Spiritual Journeys: Homemade Art” from the Becky and Wyatt Collins Collection.

“The exhibit features paintings, sculptures, drawings and films, and (it) highlights what is sometimes referred to as ‘outsider art’ throughout the country,” Greenwald said.

The first part of the workshop consisted of Bowman showing the audience a video introducing a folk artist located in Tampa, Florida, by the name of Taft Richardson. Not only did the video focus on his art, but Richardson’s neighborhood, family, beliefs and motives that influenced his art. The audience reacted in awe and gasps at Richardson’s pieces, which were all incredible, detailed works sculpted from animal bones.

During the next part of the workshop, Bowman asked everyone to join in in groups of twos and threes. She asked the audience to complete and discuss a handout describing a place of comfort. The handout prompted the audience to jot down sensory impressions, association and a distilled image, symbol word or phrase to describe a place of comfort.

Bowman eagerly selected volunteers from the audience to share what they had completed. Greenwald described her place of comfort as UL Lafayette’s Cypress Lake. She described it as “a natural refuge at the center of campus and work. An exotic, unexpected place.”

Bowman then led the audience to the next room to preview a piece of art to be featured in the upcoming February exhibit.

Attendees gathered around a covered statue and then swarmed to view up close detail when the countdown from five to one ended and the sheet was lifted.

The statue revealed was a grey-haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned Moses, dressed in a long, vibrant yellow and gold gown, holding the Ten Commandments in each hand.

It was said that this piece of work was a commission piece, meaning the artist created an idea given to them.

“Folk art should be something from them to us,” said Rennee Roberts.

Bowman pointed out how the bright yellow and gold vertical panels on the gown of the upright statue gave it a sense of boldness and described it as “having a presence.” “A very Anglo-Saxon Moses, wouldn’t you say?” she added.

She then led the attendees back to

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