Hilliard exhibitions twist new tales
From romance to Rodrigue, museum debuts new art

Patrons stroll through the Hilliard museum during the opening reception of the spring 2016 art exhibits.

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From pieces by iconic artists to dresses made of pages from romance literature, the Paul and Lulu Hilliard Art Museum spring exhibitions explore different approaches to storytelling.

The collections, which were introduced at the museum’s opening night reception on Friday, Jan. 15, ranged from the surrealist paintings of Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí to well-known local artists like George Rodrigue.

“Fashion From Fiction: Romance Novel Dresses” by Carrie Ann Schumacher came from outside the museum’s collection, as well as featured romance novels destroyed with scissors and purposefully restructured on a mannequin.

“The general theme in there is about what it is to be female and in our current society, but also in a way that it’s kind of like it’s that each dress tells a story,” said Jacob Spaetgens, museum security and volunteer coordinator. “Each dress is supposed to tell a story about a depiction of different ways that women are depicted in today’s society.”

The dresses will be on display from Jan. 15 until May 14.

“Depictions of Louisiana” from various artists is from the museum’s permanent collection and deals with human geography. Careful consideration came into making sure Louisiana was properly represented through the works, assistant curator Lizzy Oxler said.

“Louisiana/the South is definitely a place that its story is told often from other people’s point of view (and) not necessarily from people who are from here,” said Oxler.

With works from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, the exhibit is speckled with literary quotes throughout the room and outside the exhibit. This exhibit will tell the stories of natives from Jan. 2 to Aug. 20.

“From the Vault: Works on Paper” by Dalí and Picasso will be up from Jan. 15-May 14. Featuring Picasso’s “Femmes et Faunes” and Dalí’s “La Conquete du Cosmos II,” the exhibit plays with surrealism and the abstract.

“Picasso’s whole portfolio is about mythology and that’s a story in itself,” said Oxler. “The thing about a myth is that no one negotiates the truth of it; you just believe it. That idea of, like, believing something and not negotiating that truth applies here.”

Guests moved from exhibits as if traveling through different worlds. According to Oxler, the sharply contrasting ideas created a unique narrative.

“I tell you something about an object, you go tell someone else. It becomes the narrative that we buy, and also narratives that we confront in the works,” she said.

This confrontation springs from the different types of art.

“I thought about storytelling because I think at first glance, people might think ‘what is the connection between these three?’ said Oxler. “You have surrealists up here, you have romance novel dresses and then you have a mixture of different museum artists.”

As museum-goers received their first glimpse into the collections, volunteers did as well. Before going through the training program, the volunteers took a brief tour

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of the exhibits, and were then stationed at museums.

“I love watching the reaction of everyone who walks in, especially into (the dress) exhibit. People are just amazed and delighted and I’m having a ball,” said Karen Villien, a museum volunteer, as she scanned a blue-lined dress.

Schumacher, who hails from Chicago, has been featured in Nerdist and numerous fashion and art blogs. Appearing as if they’re made from cloth from far away, the dresses drew people’s attention as they moved closer.

“Carrie Ann Schumacher is literally using romance novels; she’s using stories to create her objects to tell the story of being a woman in society,” said Oxler.

The reception drew in around 200 people, which is a larger amount than previous years. Among museum goers was students, faculty, alumni and community members who said they looked forward to seeing the strong pieces.

“Some exhibits (are) sort of … easy