

Annual art department ceramic sale raises funds

By Katherine Walker

STAFF WRITER

KPWALKER@UNCA.EDU

Ceramic students offered bowls of all shapes and sizes at the 13th annual soup and salad sale along with chili, black bean soup and salads to fill them.

Amber Harrelson, a senior participant in the sale for a second year, said the sale raises money and recognition for the art department.

"I definitely feel like having the soup and salad sale helps a lot. Especially when we need things around the studio, we just use that money," Harrelson said.

Megan Wolfe, associate professor of ceramics and organizer of the soup and salad sale, said the money raised sends students to art conferences.

"We sell the bowls at anywhere from \$5 to \$20. It usually produces anywhere from \$1,200 to \$2,000," Wolfe said.

Harrelson said she initially wanted to major in biology, but after her first ceramics class, she knew her passion was in the arts.

"I am interested in either working in a gallery or I would love to be a professional potter, but that takes a while to get set up with your own studio and everything. I might do that later, but right now I'm really interested in gallery work," Harrelson said.

Harrelson said she recognized Asheville as a great place for the arts, but the failing economy might be discouraging to some people.

Mark Koven, a sculpture assistant professor, said he attributes a decrease in art majors to the economic downturn.

"I think you're seeing a lot of the students that come into this program may be look at it as something they can't really utilize, when in actuality there are a lot of opportunities. I think it may just be a misconception," he said.

Art is still one of the most popular majors this semester, behind health and wellness promotion, environmental studies, education, literature and psychology. However, the number of students in the major decreased by 20 percent since the spring semester of 2007, according to university officials.

Koven said his students have many opportunities after graduation, such as graduate school, graphic design, teaching and working in the private sector.

"I feel like sometimes the art department may not get as much attention as it should.

When there are basketball games, everyone at UNCA gets an e-mail about it. When there is a ceramics event, no one hears about it. We have to do our own publicity."

— Amber Harrelson,

UNCA senior participant in the art department's soup and salad ceramics sale

According to Koven, the art department prepares its students very well for post-graduation work. He said the skills they learn allow them to work in a variety of fields.

"Traditionally, the arts are underfunded. They're always seen as perhaps unneeded or unnecessary. I've been the recipient of funding. Could there be more? Yes, every program is going to say yes, there could always be more. I think the administration has been really great in recognizing that certain programs have gotten less funding than others," Koven said.

Koven said he attempts to improve the attendance at art events. For a recent event, he sent an e-mail to UNCA faculty members and welcomed more than 100 attendees.

"My goal, in a perfect world, is for us to be the little engine that does. So when a person from, let's say California, graduates from a high school or college and is looking for a unique program, that they see UNCA, this small tucked away liberal arts university in the mountains, has something incredible, interesting and unique to offer in their arts program," he said.



Alyssa Newlon- Staff Photographer

UNCA students Katie Johnson and Steve Spurgeon browsed the ceramic bowl display at the art department's 13th annual soup and salad bowl sale to raise funds for students to attend art conferences.

Harrelson said she has similar concerns about the attention the art department receives.

"I feel like sometimes the art department may not get as much attention as it should. When there are basketball games, everyone at UNCA gets an e-mail about it. When there is a ceramics event, no one hears about it. We have to do our own publicity," she said.

Wolfe said money raised at the sale helps draw attention to the art depart-

ment because it allows them to get artists from far places, like Montana, to come speak at UNCA.

"It gives them more options and helps to further their career. It's all student money. They get to vote on what they use it for and they have total control over it," Wolfe said.

The conferences offer great places to network, learn about graduate schools and to see new advances in the field from vendors, Harrelson said.