

CUAB leader focuses on uniting community

BY SETH WRIGHT
ASSISTANT ARTS EDITOR

For Carolina Union President Tom Allin, hosting a one-time Ben Folds Five reunion isn't what made 2008 successful.

It was finger-painting in the Pit. "We put butcher paper out on the floor of the Pit," he said. "People just started showing up and making art together in that early childhood, finger-painting kind of way."

Allin admitted hosting Ben Folds Five was exciting but said 2008 was a success because CUAB was able to unite the UNC community through a diversity of music, film and art.

Total attendance at the nearly 200 events in 2008 was 48,484.

Of all 194 events, 76 percent had fewer than 250 students participating. However, it was those tight-knit events that comprised 29 percent of the year's total attendance.

"It's a sign of people being comfortable with one another," Allin said. "I feel like the board has done a wonderful job of graphing programs that appeal to a wide variety of students."

A Zumba session in Gerrard Hall, a speech by "Dark Knight" producer Michael Uslan, The Cool Kids' performance — Allin said it all helped fulfill CUAB's goal of connecting students.

Allin, CUAB's music chairman last year, said he previously focused on performances, but came to the real-

ization this semester that programs like pumpkin carving and fortune telling should have his attention.

"I feel oftentimes the heart of CUAB lies in the little programs, he said. "A lot of the programs that didn't get any press I feel were really some of the best."

CUAB music Chairwoman Adele Ricciardi said 2008 didn't start out as intended because of a lack of diversity in musical acts and program.

But things were different in the fall when CUAB hosted experimental groups like Ted Leo next to popular acts like The Avett Brothers and Andrew Bird.

"I think we've had a lot more luck with booking," Ricciardi said. "We've also had a clearer focus and clearer goals coming in to this semester."

Ricciardi said the group will still look to improve, as they make a conscious effort to book female performers in 2009 and host international music acts.

Music continues to draw CUAB's largest attendance numbers, but Allin said he hopes people will remember the 2008 events that united the UNC community, rather than simply those with large attendance numbers.

"I hope some students leave thinking, 'That was the year we were finger-painting in the Pit,'" Allin said.

Contact the Arts Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Ackland basks in '1958' success

BY PHILLIP CROOK
STAFF WRITER

There is an energetic circuit pulsating through the galleries of the Ackland Art Museum.

"Circa 1958," the exhibition assembled in celebration of the museum's 50th anniversary, generated an excited response from visitors, which in turn energized the museum staff about the Ackland's future shows.

"This is the biggest exhibition we've done, so everyone at the museum was excited about pulling it off," Director of Communications Nic Brown said. "It's icing on the cake that the public responded so well."

The museum's relationship with its visitors extended beyond walls hung with art to include a torrent of lectures, concerts and parties to celebrate Ackland's birthday.

The show opened Sept. 21 and will close Jan. 4, but Director Emily Kass said taking stock of the exhibition's achievement was possible even from the start.

She said more than 700 people flushed through the galleries at its opening to see work from transformative artists of the 1950s and '60s, like Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg.

That number does not include

the more than 300 University students who attended the Ackland's fall semester welcome back party held in the walls of the exhibit.

"The large number of people who came to celebrate with us is really special because it's an affirmation that we're connecting with our community," Kass said. "But attendance is only part of the equation."

Kass said she also measures the show's success by its ties with students' curriculum and by scholarship generated by the exhibition.

While the artists' names for spring's exhibitions may be less well-known — or even unrecognizable — Barbara Matilsky, Ackland's curator of exhibitions, said the shows' themes are just as relevant to visitors as the pieces from "Circa 1958."

The Ackland's next exhibition, "At the Heart of Progress," opens Jan. 24 and explores how the Industrial Revolution fired artists' imaginations about issues of technology and the environment.

Kass said in planning for future exhibitions, the museum is conscious of the downward-spiraling economy. She said the University made small cuts in the Ackland's funding, which delays new hiring and some publications.

The cuts will not affect the muse-



Anna Wu of Durham views the Kenneth Noland piece "That" at the opening of the "Circa 1958" exhibition at the Ackland Art Museum.

um's expected acquisitions from "Circa 1958," in which the Ackland will purchase some pieces currently on loan to the exhibition.

While the exact sales are yet to be nailed down, Kass said the museum has been saving its endowed acquisition funds, the pool of money set aside for this purchases, until she feels that the market is no longer

overpriced. "We're focusing on being prepared because everyone's affected by the economy," Kass said. "We've scaled back our budget but not in any way that I think will hurt the visitor experience."

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