

Five Minutes, Five Questions

Liv Fjellsol

Twenty-five years ago, Norwegian exchange student Liv Fjellsol finished her year at Mansfield High School (in Scott County) and returned to her home country. Now she's back in Arkansas to share her creativity with the state that hosted her two and a half decades ago.

More than 50 of Fjellsol's works on paper will be on display in the exhibition "Art says" at the Fort Smith Regional Art Museum through April. The exhibition pairs Fjellsol's works with accompanying texts provided by authors and poets from across the globe, including Arkansas natives. The pieces — which often feature animals — can seem playful on the surface but often conceptualize musings or theories about people, the world or different perspectives.

What's Up! had the chance to discuss some of Fjellsol's visions for the project before she returned to Arkansas for the opening reception on Thursday.

Q. Where did the idea for "Art says" come from?

A. The idea for "Art says" grew over many years after starting [to paint] animals to mask people and cases I painted about. It was always about people and society. My art "said" more than it seemed, and the need to express some of it grew strong enough to start the book project and invite guest writers.

Q. Is there a message in "Art says" you're trying to lead viewers to?

A. With the book — and now the exhibition — "Art says," I want the viewer to be led into thinking more and into thinking again. If we more often take the time to think again, we may get broader ideas about life and how we live it.

Q. How do you feel Arkansas viewers relate to your work compared to the way people elsewhere connect to it?

A. The world is a lot smaller now [that] we have the internet to connect and share news and experiences. But there are still some cultural differences in the development of society and politics. For the "Art says" exhibition, I invited some extra guest



COURTESY PHOTO

Artist Liv Fjellsol holds her artwork "Danger."

writers from USA and from Arkansas to give the locals a stronger relation to some of the issues I work with. Most of my work — I think — people can relate to, anyway. The texts are not needed for the art experience, but the texts certainly give it all an extra edge and more depth for those who want to read it.

Q. What do you feel the text accompanying the art works adds to the show and the message you're going for?

A. I always work with a theme from different angles and consult different specialists to get the details I need in my work or in the understanding and preparations for my work. The texts add a strong interdisciplinary strength to the exhibition and in that way

shows a little bit of how I work with my art.

I am so proud of the international team of guest writers in the "Art says" project! This is already starting to grow further and into the next book project: "Art cares."

Q. What do you think — or hope — your art can help people realize about the world around them?

A. At best one can hope that art can help people realize that the world around them [is] connected in so many ways. Things happen for a reason and should be handled with respect. Whether you like people or not; whether you like a case or not. Always think again and do not judge a person or a society. We never have all the answers and sometimes questions

are more important. Be open minded, get a broader vision of life and there will be more peace personally and politically.

— JOCELYN MURPHY
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FAQ

'Art says'

WHEN — Through April 2
WHERE — Fort Smith Regional Art Museum
COST — \$5; free for members
INFO — 784-2787 or fsram.org