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Exhibit series showcases final Oklahoma artist of the year

OKLAHOMA CITY – Self-described as a country boy from the sticks, Oklahoma City artist Paul Mays credits his abilities to a childhood spent building and creating in a natural environment.

His consistent concentration on the five elements – earth, metal, water, wood and fire – is both reminiscent of simple days in Blanchard, Okla., and Mays’ desire to connect to the world around him.

“My work is an abstract description of the collective conscious, energy, or eros, that unites the universe,” said Mays. “I describe this unity with abstract linear patterns and formally arranged materials.”

The energy that pulses through his work weaves together various patterns that represent the basic elements.

A 2002 University of Sciences and Arts of Oklahoma graduate, Mays only recently burst onto the Oklahoma art scene but has already exhibited his original artwork at multiple art shows throughout the state. His works have been included in the Paseo Arts Festival, World’s Fair Gallery in Tulsa, Momentum-OKC and Momentum-Tulsa. Mays’ reputation as one of Oklahoma’s up-and-coming artists has been solidified by awards like the Jurors Award for the EdgeArtNow Show through the Individual Artists of Oklahoma Gallery and an honorable mention and purchase award at the Seven-State Biennial Exhibition, a collaboration between the USAO Art Gallery and Lawton’s Leslie Powell Gallery.

Mays’ next stint will be an exhibit at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City as part of its art on shARTel series, which has featured four Oklahoma artists in 2008.

A grand opening event on Thursday, Oct. 2 will be held for Mays, the final artist featured in the art on shARTel series at the Museum. The series, which has also featured Tulsan Michelle Firment Reid, Oklahoma Citian Paul Medina and a juried show of Ponca City artists, was designed to provide an outlet for local artists to present their works to proud Oklahomans and tourists.

“The Gaylord-Pickens Museum focuses on telling Oklahoma’s story through its people,” said Karlee Chill, director of museum exhibitions. “The artists we have been privileged to showcase this year through the art on shARTel series are a tribute to our state’s creativity, talent and passion.”

While the artwork remains in keeping with the Museum’s mission, it’s a sharp contrast to other displays in the 22,000 square feet of exhibit space. The high-tech, interactive Museum is filled with plasma screen televisions, computer screens, touch screens and even sound recording booths.

“We have created a museum experience unlike anything else you’ll find in the state,” said Chill. “Student and adult visitors alike have enjoyed experiencing the history of our state’s people through very unconventional means. Because visitors can touch and interact with the majority of our exhibits, they become very engaged in what they’re learning.”

The event, from 5 to 7 p.m. is free to the public and will feature cocktails and appetizers by Cheever’s Café.

Mays’ *Head in the Clouds, Feet in the Mud* exhibit will be on display in the Tulsa World Gallery at the Museum from Oct. 2 to Dec. 31.

For information on Mays’ show, visit www.oklahomaheritage.com or myspace.com/artonshartel.

The Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum is located at NW 13th Street and Shartel Avenue in Oklahoma City. The Museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students. Group rates are available for groups of 15 or more. For more information about the Museum, call 405.235.4458 or visit www.oklahomaheritage.com.

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