Portrait artists prepare for 'Face Off'

Box Factory event offers rare insight into the artistic process

By JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO

Sight & Sound Editor

ST. JOSEPH — Bob Williams' artistic career has often included an audience.

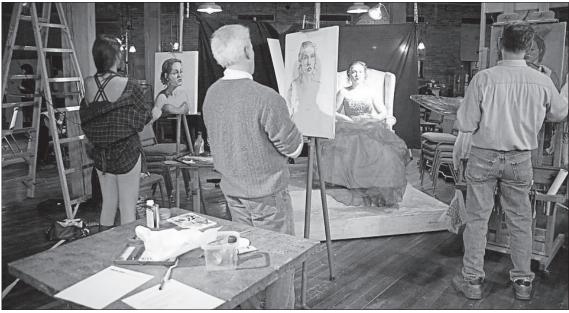
Unlike many artists who choose to work in solitude in their studio, carefully crafting pieces, Williams has a long history of creating portraits in a public setting, whether setting up a booth at firefighter's carnivals when he was starting out, to partnering in an anti-bullying program to make charcoal sketches of students in area schools, to passing the time as a frequent participant in the Krasl Art Fair on the Bluff.

"I remember one time I was doing a portrait at the Krasl, and there was a lady behind me who said, 'I don't know how he's doing this; that little girl's not sitting still at all," Williams says. "Another guy, who had seen me at Leeper Park in South Bend happened to be there and he said, in South Bend where the girl was standing on her head half the time!""

Williams hopes the models he's gath-Face Off, which takes place Saturday at the Box Factory for the Arts, will be a little better behaved. The event, which some of the area's best-known portrait process and even bid on completed piec-

"It's interesting because it's people every dollar donated is like giving \$2. looking at the same thing and not seeing the same thing," says artist Elaine Harju, "That is what's fun for the viewer, whether it's 'Are they looking at the same thing I am?' or 'I didn't notice that.' ... That's what I do to poor Bob. I'll stand behind him and look at the model and say to him, 'The nose is too big.'

In addition to Williams and Harju, artists scheduled to participate are Joe Suk-



'If you think that's bad, I saw him do this Artists Chantelle Allen, from left, Matt Payovich and Bob Williams, participate in The Great Box Factory Face Off in 2014. Saturday, Payovich, Williams and about 12 other area artists will participate in The Second Great Box Factory Face Off at the Box Factory for the Arts. The event offers the public a rare behind-the-scenes glimpse as a who's who of local artists create live model portraits within a three-hour window.

ered for The Second Great Box Factory around a live model working in an array of mediums, including oil painting, pastels, charcoal, watercolors and more.

While the event is free, donations debuted at the venue in 2014, will feature raised will support two matching grants awarded to the Box Factory - The Michartists drawing and painting from a live igan Council for Arts and Cultural Afmodel while visitors are encouraged to fairs \$18,000 grant for operations (new enjoy a beer or a glass of wine, watch the events, programming, concerts, etc.) and The Frederick S. Upton Foundation's \$4,000 grant for a classroom upgrade. So

"It's a cheap date," Harju adds.

While helping raise funds for the venue who also is participating in the event. is one of the evening's goals, Williams says he originally came up with the idea to attract other Berrien Artist Guild Members to spend more time at the Box

"The Berrien Artists Guild used to have meetings a couple times a month," Williams says. "Once we built the Box Factory it was primarily about art shows up, Matt Payovich, Nathan Margoni, and art show openings and studio artists Jessabelle O'Neal, Tom Fehlner, Jon but people who are members, particular-Rosengren, Angie Mamouzellos, Emily ly older members, we didn't see them as Rhoads, Alexandria Foster and Janet much. Kristin (Hosbein) and I started Frakes. About three artists will gather talking about that fact, and I felt kind of best in the world. These are artists you @HPBonfiglic

IF YOU GO

What: The Second Great Box Factory Face Off

When: 6:30-9:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Box Factory for the Arts. 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph

How much: Free, but donations will be accepted

Contact: 983-3688 or www.boxfactoryforthearts.org

for our members.

Williams, who belongs to the Portrait ing their national convention, says one of his favorite events was the Face Off.

"They have 15 of the world's best artists and they have models and they all paint those models at the same time," he says. "The rest of the membership stands around and watches. It's a fabulous event for me because I'm getting to watch the

read about and hear about and now you get to see them work.

Williams took that same approach in creating the Box Factory event, although he concedes that he and his fellow artists may not be as celebrated.

'Most people in St. Joe haven't even heard of us," Williams says laughing, prompting Harju's rebuttal.

"I want to say something about Bob," she says. "When Bob does his portraits, especially his pastels, he can see color in a way that other people can't. I know I can't see color the way he does.

And that's sort of the point of an event guilty that we didn't have as many events like this, offering insight into the artistic

"When we did it the first time, to tell Society of America, occasionally attend- you the truth, I thought we would get some members and some artists but I didn't think anyone else was going to show up," says Williams, who also happens to be the namesake of the Robert K. Williams Gallery at the Box Factory. "I was surprised with the crowd we had, and I hope we have more this time."

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