

Woven Forest Exhibit Welcomes Spring at Creative 360

What: *Growing Green in the Forest Glen* art exhibit

Where: Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) at 1517 Bayliss in Midland.

When: March 5 – April 26, 2010

Cost: Free. Donations always gratefully accepted.

For more information: Call (989) 837-1885 or visit www.becreative360.org

Midland – During March and April, all 2300 square feet of the Creative 360 gallery in Midland will be home to more than 200 woven fiber trees reaching as high as 15 feet. The trees, in all colors of the spectrum, are the life's work of fiber artist Roz Berlin of Saginaw. Berlin creates the trees on a four-harness loom, using a blend of natural and synthetic fibers.

The artist hopes that visitors to the exhibit will be inspired by the magic and mystery of the woven forest to protect and preserve the natural environment that we have inherited. She is passionate about safeguarding the world's forests. "Without trees," she says, "we do not breathe." Berlin has been inspired by the many cultural traditions in which people enter the forest to complete a quest or to face the unknown, including their own capacity for courage and fulfillment: "When I create my trees, I seek to touch the ancient memory core of all who walk within the forest, to somehow increase an awareness and perhaps alter how we think or feel about our inner and outer worlds."

The original inspiration for the woven forest was a single tree that Berlin created in 1973 for her young son's room, to nurture his interest in the book "Where the Wild Things Are." Ever since she began exhibiting, Berlin has encouraged parents and caregivers with young children to bring a book to the exhibit, find a comfortable nook, and read. Conscious of the echo of past generations that seems to emerge from a forest setting, Berlin acknowledges that fostering reading in the forest is a tribute to her late mother, the musician, artist and poet Agnes Greenwalt Mathews. "Greenwalt," of course, means "green forest." Berlin was fascinated to learn, after commencing work on her woven trees, that the given name of her maternal grandmother was "Forest," because prior to giving birth, Berlin's great-grandmother dreamed of a young girl in the woods.

Installation of the exhibit in the Creative 360 gallery has brought creative challenges to Program Coordinator Colleen Reed and a team of volunteers with experience in museum design. “It was great witnessing the conversation among Thad and Ed Hallberg, John Metcalf, and Christopher Malczewski, just deciding how we could install the forest without damaging our ceiling,” said Reed. “They shared ideas and figured it out. The grid that they designed, fashioned, and installed is the perfect solution.” Since preserving the integrity of its Alden B. Dow-designed building is one of the purposes of Creative 360, completing the installation without harm to the building’s interior was a priority for the team. After installation of the grid structure, the artist supervised placement of the trees. “Each exhibition has its own identity,” she said. She creates new work for each exhibition. Former Creative 360 Board member and Chemical City Garden Club President Anne McGeehan-Woodard assisted Berlin in preparing the trees for installation. “It’s like working in a winter garden,” she said.

During the exhibit, various events in the integrated arts are scheduled to take place within the forest. Details and photos are posted at www.becreative360.org.

- On March 4, members of Creative 360 are invited to a preview and artist talk, at 7 pm.
- On March 5, a free public reception opens the exhibit at 7 pm.
- Parents and caregivers are invited to “Read Among the Roots” with their children, every Monday, March 8–April 19, from 10 am–noon. No charge.
- Free activities for all ages during Brain Awareness Week, March 15 – 21, will encourage creative play based on experiences in the woven forest.
- On March 17, at 7 pm, Thad Hallberg and John Metcalf will facilitate Pecha Kucha night, a networking session for artists. No charge, but please pre-register for more information.
- On March 23, René Johnson, a graduate of the Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa and mother of Midland artist Emma Johnson, will offer a workshop for adults, “Read Me a Story,” with hints about how to make stories come alive for the children in their lives.
- On April 23, Shakespeare’s birthday, and April 24, the Restoration Theatre Group of Midland will present “The Tempest” within the forest, with audience members seated throughout the environment.
- On Sunday, April 25, Midland musician Jim Hohmeyer will be honored with a luncheon and musical program set in the forest.
- Students in the Flying Pig Theatre Academy will be led in theater exercises in the forest during their Monday and Saturday classes.
- Members of the Midland Artists’ Guild will hold their March and April meetings in the forest.

About the artist

A native of Saginaw, Rosalind Kay Mathews Berlin earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Art Education from Michigan State University. Later, she earned another master’s degree in counseling education from Central Michigan University. During the past 40 years she has taught art and weaving to all ages

and levels of students in both private and public institutions. She has traveled and studied fibers and fiber art throughout the United States, Great Britain, Central and South America. Her woven works have appeared in many private and public collections, as well as individual, invitation and juried group exhibitions in galleries, museum and universities in Michigan and the surrounding states. She was featured in Harriet Tidball's Shuttlecraft Guild Monograph, **Contemporary Costume: Strictly Handwoven**. Berlin is featured on the cover of **Fascination with Fiber: Michigan's Handweaving Heritage**, published in 2006 by Marie A. Gile of Michigan State University and Marion T. Marzolf, Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan. During the past 20 years, Berlin's forest has been exhibited at the Midland Community Center, the Midland Center for the Arts, Saginaw Valley State University, the Michigan Women's Historical Center, Creative Spirit Center in its original Townsend Street location, and the Crooked Tree Arts Center in Petoskey.

About Creative 360

Creative 360, formerly known as Creative Spirit Center, is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center's mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, art exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, mental and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Visit www.becreative360.org for more information about the offerings at Creative 360, or call (989) 837-1885 to request a mailed copy of the current schedule.

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