

A piece of junk is a work of art

Retired teacher showcases her piece



There to show off the “Elephant in the Room” junk art piece on Monday were (front row, from left) sixth grader Drew Cooley and seventh grader Dru Nielsen; and (back row, from left) eighth grader Natalie Dornbush, eighth grade Kaylee Camp, seventh grader Keegan Birt and retired fifth grade teacher and “Elephant in the Room” creator Diane Guntzel. The art is located inside the Clinton Middle School’s library.

Alexandria Bryson photo/ Clinton Herald

CLINTON — Retired fifth-grade teacher Diane Guntzel brought her creativity to Clinton Middle School recently, donating her junk art piece, “The Elephant in the Room,” to the school’s library.

Guntzel started junk art about eight years ago when she saw something at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport and thought it was cool. She also saw pictures of junk art and also took a class in Davenport. She said this is just one of the art medians she is trying to follow. She’s also trying to paint, participate in wood carving and finding other weird ways to express art.

“I am very interested in junk art, many of my other pieces I have done are junk art,” Guntzel said. “I wanted to completely do something that was my own; not just covering a chair or a car. Then I kept saying to myself ‘you better get going, you’re not getting any younger.’ I was thinking to myself and thought of an elephant; elephants are cool. Then I started dreaming about things and figured out how to do the armature; that was the key once I got the armature, I’d be good.”

“The Elephant in the Room” is all about diversity and expressing being different, Guntzel said.

She used the baby arms as tusks because they reach out. They are reaching for diversity, which is what she is trying to say in this art piece. It started out just being the elephant in the room — a topic people don’t want to talk about, Guntzel said. She started with a plain head and then someone gave her an idea to put a tiara on top of it. That is when diversity popped up.

Most of the time when she was making it, ideas kept surfacing. She has created different themes around the elephant, such as superheroes and evildoers, princesses, day of the dead, food, musical instruments, game pieces and bugs.

She left the elephant’s head dark with beads to draw attention to the diversity crown, she said. She used PVC pipes, yogurt lids, beads, fan parts, a toy car and plastic pieces to hold it together with some stuff screwed in to hold it and others glued.

Clinton Middle School students, including eighth grader Kaylee Camp, enjoy looking at the art piece.

“I think it’s really cool and so creative how she used all the different pieces,” Camp said. “She was also really patient when I had her as a fifth grade teacher, so it doesn’t really surprise me that she was able to put this together because that would take a lot of patience.”

Eighth grader Natalie Dornbush thought it was amazing how many pieces she put into it, and the different things Guntzel used for the body of the actual elephant.

“It’s really like Mrs. Guntzel to make something like that,” seventh grader Keegan Birt said. “She’s really creative, weird and crazy in a good way.”

Seventh grader Drew Cooley said it’s awesome because usually all they do is just come in the library and read. Now there can be groups of people coming in and finding a lot of stuff on the elephant.

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