



MATT SCHMACHTENBERG / THE BREEZE

Student-run artWorks gallery offers real-world curating experience

By **KELSEY NUNN**
The Breeze

Feel free to hop in the tub at artWorks gallery this week. The 400-pound, cast-iron bathtub is a feature piece in student artist Cassie Reeder's installation, "Exploration of Self." Gallery visitors can sit in it and write messages along the side.

Creating and installing massive pieces of art is one of the ways artWorks gallery, a completely student-run space on Grace Street, helps artists and interns prepare for a career in the gallery world.

The walls in the gallery are movable, so the space changes depending on what's currently on display. The space retains its open, one-room quality no matter how it's set up.

Reeder and senior Dan Dechiara, another artist carried the bathtub up two flights of stairs into the gallery before Monday's exhibition opening.

"It was pretty comical," Reeder said. "We were nice and sweaty and covered in cast-iron dust. My projects tend to involve heavy hauling of ridiculous objects."

About 15 interns are responsible for installing and taking down all the exhibits, cleaning, painting and sanding the walls before each new installation.

Two assistant directors — all undergraduate students — accompany Braxon Congrove, the gallery director. A gallery adviser supervises them.

Congrove interviews each artist to determine who will show their work and arranges the schedule of when each artist's exhibition displays. The gallery exclusively features undergraduate student work.

see **GALLERY**, page 8



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TOP ArtWorks Gallery is run by a student director and two assistant directors. The space is located at 131 Grace St. **BOTTOM** Students sit in a bathtub in senior Cassie Reeder's exhibit, "Exploration of Self," which opened on Monday.

Alums take tailgating game to professional level

Owners of Sam's Cornhole Bags see jump in nationwide sales for handmade products

By **GREER DRUMMOND**
The Breeze

In August, alumni Erik Pitzer and Zac Hittie's cornhole bag company had sold about 2,500 bags. As of yesterday, the two have sold 4,300 across the country.

Samscornholebags.com, launched in January by Pitzer and Hittie is gaining more traffic as the fall sports season continues and they've reached the second page on Google when someone searches "cornhole bags."

"We're above both of our expectations in terms of where we'd be in worldwide web searches," said Hittie, a 2006 graduate and former integrated science and technology major. "We didn't think that would happen within our first year."

Pitzer and Hittie get their materials locally and then cut, stuff and sew each cornhole bag themselves, according to weight and dimension standards set by the American Cornhole Association.

"My friends and I can instantly pick out the bags that are unevenly weighted or factory made," said John Mills, a 2009 graduate. "And [Sam's] gets it right every time. I've given away at least three sets to friends who love tailgating."

Sam's Cornhole Bags has also expanded its social media presence by adding Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Hittie explains that those sites are helping drive their website traffic, in addition to the increasing word of mouth in the Harrisonburg community. So far, they have sold bags in 38 states, and recently got



BRIAN PRESCOTT / THE BREEZE

Zac Hittie (left) and Erik Pitzer started their cornhole bag business in January. They make them at their home in Harrisonburg.

a sale in Hawaii.

In August, the pair had sold about 2,500 bags and as of yesterday they had sold 4,300 across the country since starting the website. What sets Pitzer and Hittie's website apart from other cornhole bag sites is its specialty color selection feature. This feature selects the right hue of fabric for the bags based on a sports team's colors.

Purple and gold is the No. 1 color combination, but black is their No. 1 selling color, since it's used the most by sports teams. With Family Weekend tailgates coming up, they saw more sales than normal this week.

"Every time I feel like we're about to slow down, we get a bunch of orders," said Pitzer, a 2007 graduate

and former media arts and design major.

Sam's Cornhole Bags saw an increase in local orders thanks to a September promotion allowing any Harrisonburg resident to purchase a set for \$25 and receive their order the same day, personally delivered by Pitzer or Hittie, without paying a shipping fee.

Senior Michael Prior, a media arts and design major, ordered a purple-and-gold set during the promotion. He did an Internet search hoping to find a local cornhole shop but found samscornholebags.com instead.

"The selection they have is impressive," Prior said. "I knew I would buy from them when I found out they deliver the bags for free."

Sales leveled off in the middle of the month after the promotion peak passed, which Hittie expected.

While they aren't planning any special promotions for this weekend, they'll be donating a set of bags and two custom-painted JMU cornhole boards to the Duke Club Scholarship Auction on Oct. 26. Last year, this event raised more than \$45,000.

Future plans continue to center on increasing samscornholebags.com's online presence through social media and specialty color selection pages. Pitzer and Hittie hope to offering full game sets (eight bags in two colors and two boards) by next spring.

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UPB selects comedy act

Second City troupe to perform in October

UPB announced on Tuesday that Second City will perform at Wilson Hall on Oct. 18.

Second City is a 50-year-old comedy team that specializes in sketch and improv. Members have included John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Mike Myers, Steve Carell, Stephen Colbert and Tina Fey.

According to Liz Rea, UPB public relations director, event coordinators are unsure of which comedians will be in the fall show. The names weren't included in the contract.

The UPB Special Events Committee, directed by Abby Watson, decided on Second City. The committee was responsible for organizing last month's Puppy Party and Bongo Ball Mania.

Last year, the committee brought comedian Jay Pharoah.

Although the Crazy Commons announcement event was cancelled because of rain, UPB plans to promote the event through its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Organizers are also hope that they'll be able to give away 20 meet-and-greet passes, though they're still waiting for confirmation from Second City.

The event starts at 8 p.m. Tickets go on sale today in the Warren Hall Box Office and are \$5 for students and \$8 for the public.

— staff report