

On a roll

Art Museum plans to get show on road

By CANDACE ATKINS
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JUST SAY "The Art Museum Art Box" to Chuck Hilger and watch him grin big, wave his hands in the air and talk up a storm about his new project for the Art Museum of Santa Cruz County — a mobile museum designed to bring art to everyone from mall-goers to labor camp residents.

"It just makes sense," Hilger said. "I know it's going to work."

The Art Box is a 38-foot moving van donated by Owens Brothers Transfer and Storage in Santa Cruz. Thanks to inmate students at the Sheriff's Rehabilitational Facility in Watsonville, the van was refurbished and painted on the outside by members of their Regional Occupational Program auto body class.

"I just went out and asked," Hilger said. "Docents, volunteers, staff — a potpourri of wonderful people have helped."

Hilger hopes to put the van on the road within a month. He's spent weekends working on the white interior, installing walls, track lights and a fan to create what he describes as a "small museum room."

In addition, the Art Box will also have a stage set for live performances, and there will be tables available for workshops and classes.

The Art Box will provide exhibits while the Art Museum's future home, McPherson Center for Art and History, is under construction. But, Hilger said, it will remain a museum exhibit and educational facility in its own right after the permanent center opens in April, 1992.

"People say, 'Oh, the poor (art) museum, it's gone away. What's happened?'" Hilger illustrated.

The Art Box, with the Art Museum logo painted outside, will keep the Art Museum's name circulating throughout the county, he said — one of the most efficient ways to remind people that the Art Museum is doing fine while waiting for the Art and History Center.

A version of a former exhibit, "The Elements of Art" will be the first exhibit. Hilger said the

award-winning "Art Is..." book created especially for children by Mya Kramer and John Simon, will be used to augment the show. He said he also plans to have the Saturday morning art education workshops for children that were popular when the Art Museum was located in the Santa Cruz Public Library building.

"We try to impart the elements of art so kids go away (having art) demystified," he said. "We'll have something set up for kids' (art) exercises. They'll have something to take home that they created."

Hilger said everyone he's approached about the Art Box has loved the idea. The Art Box will be one of four mobile art museums in the state. The others are in Monterey, San Diego and Los Angeles. He said he'd like to have a "mobile art rig get-together" in the future to trade ideas and share expertise.

But he also plans to keep busy cooperating with local resources, including schools, other arts organizations and shopping centers. He sees the Art Museum combining efforts with two or more educational, arts and commercial organizations for exemplary offerings that can include drama and music as well as art.

There will be no charge to visit The Art Box.

"The Art Box is not a money-making venture," he said. "It's strictly an educational effort."

There's money, received from individuals and business donations, that should cover The Art Box for the first year. After that, Hilger said he'll need contributions to help underwrite future years.

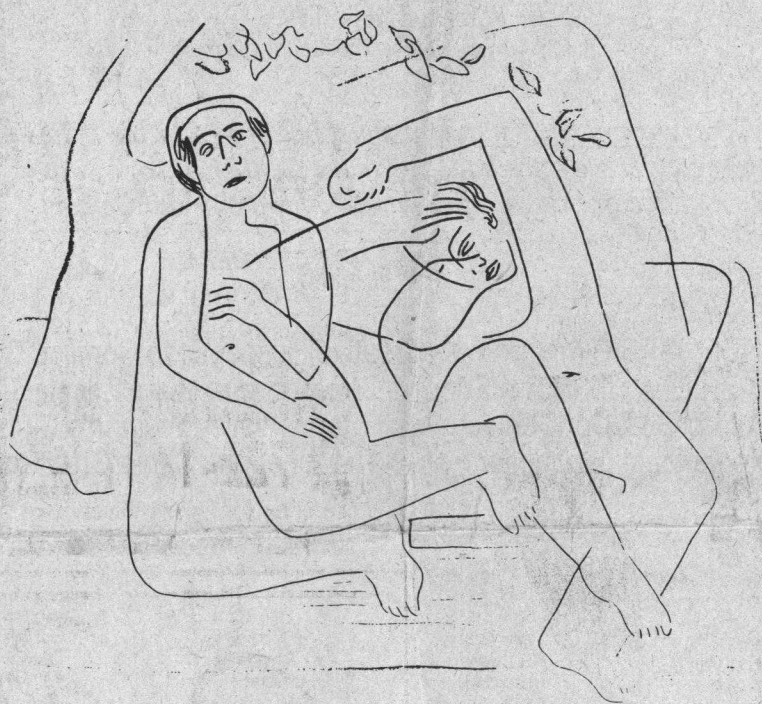
The Art Box will enable The Art Museum of Santa Cruz County to live up to its name even more by bringing art to people who would ordinarily have a hard time visiting a museum. School budget cutbacks have almost eliminated bus service for field trips, and people in the outskirts of the county can find it difficult to find the time or money to come into town for an exhibit.

Because the Art Box exhibits can be changed relatively



Mike McCollum

Tom Alejo, holding paper, and Chuck Hilger, at left, with students who painted The Art Box.



This sketch by David Park is part of the "Elements of Art" exhibit.

quickly, Hilger said it will be a museum space that can potentially appeal to everyone.

"We can do bilingual shows for labor camps," Hilger said. "Why not? We can drive the thing out there (to Watsonville camps) and let the people enjoy

the cultural benefits. There's no end to what we'll be able to do.

"Hello, county," he said, "Here we are."

Information on The Art Box exhibits or how to donate time, materials or money is available by calling 429-1964.



Mike McCollum

An ROP student works on the Art Box.