

BRAUER FEATURES SHEESLEY'S 'DOMESTIC VISION'

VALPARAISO, Ind. – While living in Chicago’s western suburbs for more than 30 years, artist Joel Sheesley has spent much of his time considering domestic life in suburban America, and an exhibition at Valparaiso University’s Brauer Museum of Art that opens Aug. 19 will offer a retrospective of his work.

“Domestic Vision: Twenty-Five Years of the Art of Joel Sheesley” features 33 paintings by the internationally-respected artist and is being accompanied by a new book of the same title edited by Gregg Hertzlieb, director of Brauer Museum.

“No doubt some of us hide our habits and create a false domestic facade, but for most, home is where we let our hair hang down,” Sheesley says of his work. “So I have explored home and its domestic expansion into a wider geography of parks and playgrounds, streets and highways, ruins and wastelands.” Hertzlieb said Sheesley’s oil paintings of domestic life, many of them large-scale, invite reflection as to how people are fitted to this world, how people fit the world to themselves and how people are fit for one another.

In many of his paintings, Hertzlieb said Sheesley’s concern with the suburban environment is reflected by juxtaposing human figures with backyard swimming pools, highway landscapes and home interiors. At times, the house acts like a camera, bringing the outside world in through windows. In other instances, Hertzlieb said the home becomes the stage for human drama.

An opening reception for “Domestic Vision” will take place at 7p.m. Sept. 5 and offers an opportunity to meet the artist and hear his comments on the exhibition. The reception is free and open to the public, and copies of the book “Domestic Vision: Twenty-Five Years of the Art of Joel Sheesley,” will be available for purchase and signing.

“Domestic Vision” will be displayed at Brauer Museum through Nov. 23.

The exhibit and accompanying book, published by Lutheran University Press, are supported by a \$10,000 grant Brauer Museum received through the National Endowment for the Arts’ Challenge America: Reaching Every Community program. The book includes full-color images of each work in the Sheesley exhibit and essays by five art scholars, including Dr. David Morgan, formerly Duesenberg professor of Christianity and the arts at Valparaiso.

Sheesley’s work has been exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the country and won numerous prizes at juried competitions. He received an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship in 2002 and teaches art at Wheaton (Ill.) College. Sheesley is the co-author of “Sandino in the Streets,” which is designed around the artist’s photographs of contemporary street art in Nicaragua, and his essays have been published in Image, Books and Culture and New Art Examiner.

Other events taking place in conjunction with the exhibit are: Sept. 8 – Valparaiso Organization for Learning and Teaching Seniors presentation by Sheesley on “Developing a Domestic Vision,” 3:30 p.m., Urschel Hall; Sept. 24 – Gallery Talk with Sheesley, 7 p.m., Brauer Museum; Oct. 7 – Brauer Museum Teacher Workshop, 9 a.m., Brauer Museum; Nov. 5 – Coffee Hour with Sheesley, 7 p.m., Brauer Museum.

The Sept. 24 and Nov. 5 events are free and open to the public. The Sept. 8 event is open to members of VOLTS; call (219) 464-5313 or visit valpo.edu/continuinged/nondegree/volts.php for more information. Primary and secondary school teachers from the region interested in learning more about Sheesley's art and receiving materials that can be used in classes during the free Oct. 7 workshop should call (219) 464-5048.

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