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**James Bzura: Featured Artist at Jaques Art Center in Aitkin
POP COLOR UNIVERSE Now on Display until August 29th**

Crosby (MN) based artist, James Bzura, pulls from observations of his past and present life to create his highly distinctive "pictorial sculptures." His painted wood sculptures are staggering bursts of lyrical color and cultural observation that comprise his one-man show, "Pop Color Universe," now on display until August 29th at the Jaques Art Center in Aitkin. His colorful and often whimsical art work provides a COVID safe option to brighten your day during these restricted, sometimes dismal, times.

Originally from upstate New York, Bzura says his work was initially inspired by the vast beauty of the world around him. "Landscapes were one of my first inspirations. I began working on pieces that incorporated the Hudson River as a backdrop because it was close to where I grew up. As a child I would see the Hudson River landscape in pictures at museums and it inspired me to make my own," said Bzura.

Music played a significant role in his artistic development as he left home and moved out into the world. While at Stony Brook University he had the opportunity to interact with some of the most prominent cultural creators of the time; Miles Davis, Grateful Dead, Allman Brothers, Chuck Berry and others. Not only did they inspire him to write music, but they influenced the visual art he was creating as well.

The counter-culture that evolved in the 60' & 70's also influenced his perspective. "A truly fantastic experience was attending Woodstock," said Bzura. It left an indelible mark on him, and he talks fondly of his time there where peace, love, and non-violence and, of course, music took center stage. "I saw so many different shapes, forms and appearances there. My experience at Woodstock carried through my life, reminding me that we can be in touch with how different we all are and how we can appreciate the differences. It gives me a deeper meaning of compassion and love," shared Bzura.

He also finds inspiration from Beat Generation writers like Jack Kerouac, Neil Cassady, and Allen Ginsberg. All were pioneers of the Beat Generation, creating literary works that continue to influence today's culture. In one of his pieces, the book "On the Road" by Kerouac can be seen casually laying in the back window of a car while Jazz musicians sway in the backseat.



To depict this fusion of music, history, and culture that make up his world view, Bzura cuts wood to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional sculptures and then emboldens it with vivid color. In "Earth Father Bass," a string bass becomes a

visual expression of music and history uniquely portrayed through the eyes of Bzura. "I have a strong background in music, beginning in 1959 with classical music. I have written songs about art and American regionalism and I play 12 different instruments. My love for Greek mythology and European history, alongside Native American history, all play a role in my work," shared Bzura.

In this exhibit, one will also see paintings by Bzura in both acrylic and watercolor mediums. Life in the Rocky Mountains provided picturesque vistas that were captured by Bzura in his art, as he benefited from tutelage of acclaimed artists in the Western United States. Eventually the blend of woods, water, and old farms in a pastoral setting claimed his imagination and he set up an art and music studio in Minnesota lake country.

Most recently, Bzura pays homage to the city of Aitkin with his work inspired by the annual "Fish House Parade" that takes place each year right after Thanksgiving. A 5-foot-wide canvas showcases the floats in the parade, and over 300 people are painted into the piece. "As another element of the show, I included my work that captures the local history, the buildings, the people, and traditions because it is all so very interesting and unique," shared Bzura.

Art is form of healing, offering a path that provides solace and comfort during times of stress and uneasiness. Art also offers us a place for our thoughts to wander that is safeguarded by the beauty it gives. Don't miss James Bzura's exhibit now on display at the Jaques Art Center in Aitkin until August 29th. Located at 121 2nd Street N.W, the center is open from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Call 218-927-2363 or visit jaquesart.com for more information.

