

Taber Art Gallery opens 25th season Sept. 2

Special anniversary exhibition features artwork of the HCC Visual Art faculty, past and present

HOLYOKE – The Taber Art Gallery at Holyoke Community College will open its 25th season Tuesday, Sept. 2, with a special anniversary exhibition featuring the artwork of the HCC Visual Art faculty, past and present.

The exhibition, “Milestone: 25 Years of the Taber Art Gallery,” runs through Oct. 23. The gallery will host a special anniversary celebration in the gallery on Thursday, Sept. 4, from 5 to 7 p.m., with a performance by itinerant painter and former HCC faculty member Sam Rowlett at 5:30 p.m., followed by a talk by gallery director Rachel Rushing at 6 p.m.

Using his mobile portrait studio backpack, Rowlett will present “Free Portraits” with visitors during the reception.

“College art galleries and art departments have a unique relationship compared to other departments on any campus,” said Rushing. “Art professors focus on teaching students how to create while galleries offer an in-person, real-life context for what happens to art after it is created. Spaces like the Taber Art Gallery provide the visceral experience of engaging with professional artists modeling pathways forward that students can pursue. ‘Milestone’ celebrates this interconnection by looking at the very artists HCC stu-

dents work with and learn from, and who have made the Visual Art Department what it is today.”

The gallery is named after its benefactor, Holyoke businessman and philanthropist Donald Taber, the former chairman of American Pad and Paper. In 2020, Taber and his wife, Wilmina Taber, donated 45 pieces of original artwork to the college from their personal collection and also endowed a scholarship through the HCC Foundation. The gallery now holds more than 350 pieces in its permanent collection.

“Since opening on Aug. 25, 2000, we have featured 131 exhibitions and well over 330 different artists in our gallery space that we have been able to share with HCC students and the wider public,” said Rushing. “That is pretty phenomenal. And that’s not even counting the annual student art exhibition we also do every year.”

Donald Taber died in 2002 at the age of 100.

His daughter, granddaughter, and two great-granddaughters visited the gallery on Aug. 25 to see some of the pieces from the original collection and view a chronology of exhibition cards promoting displays from the past 25 years.

“The progress has been amazing,” said Laura McGrew, Donald Taber’s granddaughter, who attended the gallery’s grand opening 25 years ago. “I think my grandfather would have been really happy to see all that’s happened.”

“Milestone” exhibitors include current faculty members Felice Caivano, Torry Gleason, Raishad Glover, Logan Bishop, Lahri Bond, John Calhoun, Tara Conant, Bill Devine, Chris Lizon, Margie Rothermich, Joe Sapphire; and former faculty members Robert Aller, Kelly Clare, Frank Cressoti, Cynthia

Guild, Caitlin Hurd, Amy Johnquest, Cynthia Ludlam, David Moriarty, Christy Patrick, Samuel Rowlett, Deborra Stewart-Pettengill, Frank Ward, and Chris Willingham.

After “Milestone,” the Taber Art Gallery’s 25th anniversary season will continue with “HyperColor,” Nov. 3 through Dec. 18 (six artists working in vivid, loud, unflinching color); “River Valley Radical Futures,” Jan. 20 through March 12 (imagining the Connecticut River Valley 100 years beyond the fall of capitalism); and the 2026 HCC Student Art Exhibition, April through May.

The Taber Art Gallery, located off the lobby of the HCC Library on the second floor of the HCC Donahue Building, is free and open to the public Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during regular school sessions.



Members of the Taber family visited the Taber Art Gallery on Aug. 25, on the 25th anniversary of the gallery’s opening in 2000. Donald Taber’s great-granddaughter, Haley Snyder, and daughter, Ann Nugent, hold a portrait of Donald Taber, flanked by his great-granddaughter Morgan Snyder, far left, and granddaughter, Laura McGrew, far right.

Submitted photo