

STILL PHOTO of video projection, "Turning Pages," a public art project by June Bisantz



Art And Literature To Illuminate Downtown Willimantic Facade

June Bisantz
PUBLIC ARTIST
WINDHAM

Art and literature will illuminate Main Street in Willimantic this April in the form of "Turning Pages," an interactive, outdoor light projection by public artist and Willimantic resident June Bisantz.

This site-specific piece, designed for the facade of the Willimantic Public Library will be presented in public space April 5-9 and April 12-16 from 8 p.m. to midnight, coinciding with National Library Week. Bisantz, known for exhibiting her work on billboards, buses, movie theater screens and street signs, adds architectural surfaces to her list of unusual presentation venues with her "Turning Pages" April 5 debut.

"Turning Pages" is the result of several civic collaborations. Essential support and sponsorship came from EastConn's Arts at the Capitol Theater (eastconn.org/act/), located directly opposite the public library on Main Street in Willimantic. Arts at the Capitol Theater has provided the projector and projection point for the piece, and the school's technical director, Dan Boisvert, has given Bisantz technical and logistical support.

Ted Perch, director of the Willimantic Public Library (wpkdir@biblio.org), welcomed "Turning Pages" as part of the library's National Library Week celebration, which includes an author's reading on April 13 at 7 p.m. featuring Eastern Connecticut literary luminaries Wally Lamb, Daryl Perch, Steve Starger, Sandra Marton and Lisa

Sornberger.

Additional support for "Turning Pages" came from Windham Reads, an annual literacy campaign spearheaded by Mary Lou DeVivo (mldevivo@sbcglobal.net) and Thread City Development Inc., a diverse group of residents and merchants dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Willimantic.

"Turning Pages" celebrates the power of books to ignite our imaginations and transport us to other realities. Using the Willimantic Public Library's building facade as a canvas, and projected light as "paint," Bisantz' new work is a video projection of an open book, its pages lazily turning to reveal text and images from her favorite books. Its luminous image will float above the library's front entrance, creating a glowing, animated canopy of light that will welcome readers and give them a hint of what they will find inside the building.

"Reading has saved my life many times," says Bisantz. "A good book offers escape, high drama and great adventure. 'Turning Pages' is about the excitement and anticipation of reading a new story."

"Turning Pages" is interactive and designed to expand over time. Scrolling text will invite viewers to e-mail Bisantz at JuneReads@gmail.com with their own favorite books and authors for inclusion in the piece the next time it is presented.

As the first public project of its kind in Eastern Connecticut, "Turning Pages" will break ground in municipal revitalization efforts, serving as a model for new kinds of artistic expression, community outreach and civic collaboration.

the Chronicle

An Independent Newspaper Since 1877

Vol. 128 No. 83

Thursday, April 8, 2010

Newsstand 75 Cents



photo - Al Malpa for the Willimantic Chronicle

“Turning Pages” Projects Literacy *See the light at the Willimantic Public Library*

By MICHELLE FIRESTONE
Chronicle Correspondent

WILLIMANTIC — Local artist June Bisantz has been known to dabble in untraditional mediums and display her work on unusual canvases.

Her artwork has been displayed on buses, billboards, in movies, and one of her pieces was combined with an invention.

Despite her experience, Bisantz found it challenging to create an interactive light projection on the façade of a public library.

“I had never done that before,” she said. “It was a technical challenge.”

The Willimantic Public Library on 209 Main St. is home to “Turning Pages,” an interactive light projection Bisantz created that will be displayed from twilight to midnight from now until Friday and again from April 12-16.

The project, which features a book with turning pages and numerous quotes from famous literary pieces, coincides with National Library Week, an annual celebration of the contributions of our nation’s libraries and librarians.

“It was a vision I saw in my mind,” Bisantz said.

One of the most significant individuals involved with the project is Mary Lou DeVivo, winner of the 2010 Romantic Willimantic Cupid award.

DeVivo, who spearheads the literacy program “Windham Reads,” inspired Bisantz when she came to a meeting of the Thread City Development Corp., a group dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Willimantic, and asked for ideas about how to promote literacy.

“I couldn’t agree with her more that literacy is the key to improving your life,” Bisantz said.

Additional support came from EastConn’s “Arts at the Capitol Theater program” and the Willimantic Public Library.

ACT provided a projector and projection point and the school’s technical director, Daniel Boisvert, gave Bisantz technical and logistical support.

“I love that it represents a collaboration with the town,” she said.

Bisantz, who has been an artist since age 6, included quotes from

a wide variety of literary genres in “Turning Pages,” including some from Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace,” Agatha Christie’s “Dead Man’s Mirror” and Margaret Mitchell’s “Gone with the Wind”. Her objective was to represent the wide scope of literature.

Bisantz has been engaged in musical and artistic pursuits nearly her entire life.

After receiving her master of fine arts degree in painting from Claremont Graduate University in California, she worked in various musical careers for 20 or 25 years, including writing and recording jazz pieces.

These days, she is focusing on her artwork and plays country fiddle in her spare time.

Bisantz teaches digital art and design at Eastern Connecticut State University, a program she started 15 years ago. “That’s what I came to Eastern to do,” she said. Bisantz said she is excited about “Turning Pages,” which she began organizing last fall and creating in January.

Her goal is to find new ways to reach people and engage them in dialogue about her pieces.

Norwich Bulletin

NORTHEAST EDITION

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2010

Serving Eastern Connecticut

A GateHouse New England Newspaper

Volume 150 Issue 93 75¢/Newsstand

WILLIMANTIC

Artist's project lights up library

'Turning Pages' begins Monday

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A giant, flickering book will illuminate the facade of the Willimantic library this month, its pages turning lazily as excerpts of text entice viewers.

The public art project, titled "Turning Pages," will be lit up Monday.

Created by Willimantic resident June Bisantz, the project has been orchestrated to coincide with National Library Week as well as other events, such as Windham Reads.

To create the projection, Bisantz filmed a dictionary in her studio, and blew its pages around with a fan. Then she manipulated the images, cropping them so they would be long and vertical to hover over the library's facade.



'Spoken to me'

"The Willimantic library has always spoken to me as the ideal surface for a projection," said Bisantz, who is a professor of art at Eastern Connecticut State University and teaches in the digital art and design program.

"It's a symbol of how alive a library is," she said of the project. "It will remind people how important the library is and how much of the life of a community resides in the library."

For the text, she turned to her own bookcases, pulling out her favorite books to select the excerpts of texts that accompany the image of the turning pages.

The project is meant to expand with time, and scrolling text will invite viewers to e-mail Bisantz with their own favorite authors and books for inclusion.

This is the first in a series of projections upon facades that Bisantz said she wants to create in Willimantic.

"I'd like to enliven Willimantic with new media art. There's nothing like it in this part of the state," she said. "We have the artists that can do it. I'm calling it the Willimantic screen project. ... I want people to know how amazing it is to transform an architectural facade with art, it's just a really uplifting and exciting experience."