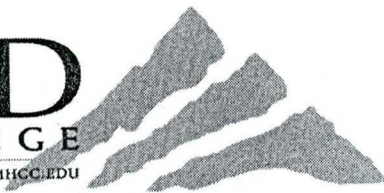


MT. HOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Fiery molten iron attracts resident sculptor



Elyse James switched from business to art after discovering MHCC's art village.

Iron melts at 2,700 degrees. Working with the heavy, molten metal is an unforgettable experience, and for sculptor Elyse James, Mt. Hood Community College student and resident artist, it's the fiery culmination of an artistic process.

"The day of the pour is very spiritual," said James. "Just carrying the ladle of molten iron is one of the most intense experiences ever."

Through experimenting with different mediums, she discovered an affinity with sculpting.

"Once I started making sculptures my ideas started to come together a lot better," she explained. "It was the best medium for me to express myself."

She was one of two MHCC students chosen to attend and exhibit her work at the International Iron Casting Conference in the United Kingdom last year. She described the trip as, "an amazing experience."

After the conference, she went on to complete a ten-week internship at the prestigious Franconia Sculpture Park in Minnesota. During her internship, she assisted professional artists in several iron pours and exhibited one of her statues with their collection.

She's now back at the MHCC "art village," a group of studios nestled in a secluded area of campus. For James, there's nowhere else she'd rather be.

"Out of all the schools I've visited, I think the environment and facilities at MHCC are top notch," she said. "I've always called this the art village; it's a community, a tight knit group of people who all support each other."

James first came to MHCC to take a few general education classes. After high school she decided to pursue business, but quickly discovered she longed for the art studio rather than the office.

James, who plans on transferring to the Pacific Northwest College of Art, attributes her continuing success to the supportive instructors at MHCC.

"Encouragement from family and friends is one thing, but from the people you're learning from—that's where it's at," she said. "A lot of art is self-confidence, if you have people backing you it helps you."

Besides being a student, she's also a resident artist and lab technician, an incredible job opportunity in a field known for extreme competitiveness. She and two other lab technicians will exhibit their work at MHCC's Visual Arts Gallery this spring.

"There's no other place I'd rather work," said James, who can't seem to praise the art program enough. "There are lots of opportunities in metal casting and a lot of different firing processes." She laughed and added. "MHCC rocks!"

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