

•Deines

Fools-A-Palooza. They have a theme — They had a theme about dogs (in 2024), which inspired several paintings with the subject of dogs in them.”

Several of Dunkel-McKnight’s paintings at the DCC feature dogs as part of the subject matter.

A few weeks after the *Bowl Plaza Ballet* exhibit closed at the Lucas Public Library, Dunkel-McKnight moved the display to the Deines Cultural Center in Russell.

Dunkel-McKnight said the exhibit at the DCC contains some of the series’ larger-sized works, whereas the display at the Lucas Public Library had only the smaller-sized artworks — 16 inches by 20 inches, and smaller.

Dunkel-McKnight said the title for the exhibition was inspired by her thoughts last summer that the Bowl Plaza in Lucas would be a great place to stage an outdoor dance festival.

She commented, “I’ve studied several dances. I used to dance, myself. I am from Los Angeles originally. As a child, I studied ballet. In my 20s, I studied belly dancing, and later I studied Israeli folk dancing with a Cal-Tech dance group — They are in Pasadena — and

(I studied) Greek folk dancing — That was in L.A.”

Dunkel-McKnight moved from southern California to Lucas, Kan., in 1994, and she has resided in the Lucas-Luray area most of the time since then.

Her artworks at the Deines Cultural Center are mostly done in oil paints on canvas. Some of smaller-sized artworks are mixed media.

“The show also comments on some social and cultural topics as well,” Dunkel-McKnight said. “For example Elvis Presley makes an appearance in one painting, and I also took the opportunity to roast Donald Trump in a set of acrylic and mixed media paintings.”

Also, Dunkel-McKnight noted that, in *Bowl Plaza Ballet*, “several pieces were inspired by Kathy Ruth Neal. She’s deceased. She was a grassroots artist, and her work is called *Wood at Play*, and it’s currently featured in the new gallery at the Grassroots Art Center (in Lucas).”

That new gallery had its grand opening during this past April.

Furthermore, Dunkel-McKnight said she is still working on eight paintings which are part of *Bowl Plaza Ballet*, and she has

other paintings which she would like to start. She hopes to complete this first series of *Bowl Plaza Ballet* by this fall.

She commented, “One of the paintings in the first series has inspired me to take on a second series which will be well underway by this fall, and the second series is called *Bowl Plaza-Mosaic Woman*.

Additionally, Dunkel-McKnight said, “On the north side of the Bowl Plaza bathroom (in Lucas), there is a mosaic-tile sculpture by Mri-Pilar. Mri-Pilar is a grassroots artist herself. She shares her residence between Lucas and Lindsborg, Kan. That one sculpture inspires the whole second series, *Bowl Plaza-Mosaic Woman*.”

Dunkel-McKnight, describing that sculpture created by Mri-Pilar, said, “It’s a circular tile woman in blue, with ribbons of color emanating from her head.”

Dunkel-McKnight said, “I expect to have one dozen to two dozen paintings in that second series, but that’s only a guess, because for the first series I thought I would have 25 to 30 pieces, but I wound up with over 115 pieces — Some of them got damaged or lost, or I donated them before the

Deines exhibit. So, the Deines has 103 paintings and three mural-sized textile quilts.”

In total, by the fall of 2025, Dunkel-McKnight plans to have about 130 paintings completed in the *Bowl Plaza Ballet* series, including the paintings which she has donated to the Lucas

Public Library.

Dunkel McKnight said *Bowl Plaza-Mosaic Woman*, which is the second series of *Bowl Plaza* paintings, is “kind of a meditative reflection on human topics.

“The series will explore a variety of human conditions, such as strength and mischievousness.

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“The first painting is called *Mosaic Woman-Lift*. The second one is *Mosaic Woman-Sun Catcher*. Another one is on the drawing board, *Mosaic Woman-Freedom*”.

Yet another painting which is on the drawing board is called *Pie Thief*.



Visitors to Russell’s Deines Cultural Center during the facility’s opening reception for the exhibition, *Bowl Plaza Ballet: Paintings by Tess Dunkel-McKnight*, included, at center, from left to right, Seth Lay of Hays (walking), Rob Lindsay of Lucas, and Elizabeth Bryan of Russell.

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