

Becoming a better writer starts at UNC

When I was in third grade, my teacher gave us an assignment. “Write a story about a dog,” she said. I don’t remember the details, but I do remember there was a laboratory, an evil scientist, a love triangle and some kind of metaphor involving Narcissus in my fifteen page masterpiece.

“You’ve got a gift,” my teacher said. “Don’t let go of it.” I’ve been writing ever since.

When I heard there was a creative writing department here at UNC, I couldn’t wait to enroll as a minor. I had visions of grandeur — I would be one of the best in my class, write a novel by the time I entered junior year and receive a ton of accolades and awards.

I had never been more wrong in my life. Students with talent well beyond my own sat next to me in class, coming up with stories and sentences that literally blew my mind. My professors didn’t use words like “gift,” “talent” or “knack.” Instead, they told me things like: “You can’t laugh a sentence,” “That really doesn’t work,” “This kind of thing would really never happen” and ultimately, “No crying allowed,” both in stories and class workshops.

The first day of my intermediate fiction writing class, the professor told us we weren’t allowed to write fantasy. “No vampires, no wizards, no magic. These are crutches,” she said. I remember my heart sticking in my throat. I’d come up with this brilliant idea for a short story that involved death masquerading as a teenage boy. What was I going to do?

Grow. My experience as a creative writing minor has forced me to step outside of my comfort zone and think about those subjects and situations that really make readers feel. It’s been a struggle, finding my voice as a writer, but the high points have



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Opinion Editor

far outweighed the low points. And oh how there have been low points — we won’t talk about my the story involving a clown and a baby. But there have also been times when I’ve been extremely proud of the work I’ve produced.

If my professors hadn’t pushed me to be better, work harder, think more creatively — if I hadn’t stayed with the creative writing minor — I would still be the girl writing about dogs and love triangles. But now I know that fiction is about more than plot — it’s about connecting. It’s about characters. It’s about life.

I encourage young writers — whether you’re serious about pursuing fiction or just enjoy writing for fun — to look into becoming a creative writing minor. You’ll have access to plenty of renowned writers like Daniel Wallace, Pam Durban and Bland Simpson, just to name a few.

The program also brings writers to campus with the Thomas Wolfe Lecture each fall; Josephine Humphreys will be here this year.

If anything, I encourage you to take at least one creative writing class during your time here. If the experience doesn’t help you blossom as a writer, it will definitely help you blossom as a person. Don’t be afraid of the criticism or the competitive nature of fiction or poetry writing here at Carolina — these are the things that push you to be better.

Pick up the pen and start dreaming, young writers. You may think you’re good at fiction now. But this place can help you become great.

Experience art at the Ackland

More than just visual arts is available at the Ackland Art Museum.

By Alex Dixon
Arts Editor

Opened in 1958, the Ackland Art Museum is a premier arts venue for UNC and the surrounding community.

The museum is an academic unit of UNC and offers free admission to the public. With more than 16,000 works of art in its holdings, the Ackland presents more than a dozen exhibitions each year.

This year, the Ackland presented exhibitions of renowned artists such as Thornton Dial and Rembrandt. The museum also features African art, folk art and artwork by UNC master of fine arts students.

Emily Bowles, director of com-

munications at the Ackland, said the museum is a great way for students to experience art. She said that the Ackland contains 14 galleries, allowing for wide variety in the art displayed.

“At any given moment, a student can walk in and see art from ancient cultures to contemporary art and everything in between from all corners of the globe,” Bowles said. “If ancient art is not your thing, if contemporary art is not your thing or even if photography is not your thing, we’ll have something else that you are likely to enjoy.”

The second floor of the Ackland is a study gallery, which features art specifically installed for use by UNC students and professors.

In addition to being a venue for visual arts, the Ackland is also a hub for performing arts.

Bowles said the Ackland has poetry readings, yoga classes,

music and even live theater performances in the galleries.

The Ackland also puts on a film forum at the Varsity Theater to show the art of cinema.

“We have some really interesting events that allow people to enjoy art at the Ackland in different ways,” Bowles said. “There’s something for everyone.”

Student Friends of the Ackland, one of the largest student organizations on campus, assists the Ackland in presenting its events.

“The organization is a way that people can support the Ackland and show their enthusiasm for the arts,” Bowles said.

The museum opened a store on Franklin Street in May 2011. The store sells products related to the Ackland’s permanent collection, such as pottery, metalwork and books.



DTH/MELISSA KEY
An activated art theater performance at Ackland Art Museum featured actors emulating characters from the museum artwork.

Contact the Arts Editor at arts@dailytarheel.com.

loves you

cuab

(carolina union activities board)

what is

cuab?

CUAB is a student organization that enriches and entertains Carolina with movies, music, arts & design, comedy and current issues. Student run. Student fees. Student ideas.

want to get

involved?

(it’s easy!)

Stop by Union 3109 and say hello! Join our listserv to get updates and find our table at Fall Fest!

unc.edu/cuab

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whatever you love, cuab wants you.

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