

Art professor's legacy lives on through his work

By Deborah Strange
Staff Writer

At LIGHT Art + Design, Lucky Strike cigarettes and red Bibles embossed with gold crosses decorate the walls.

The studio, on the ground floor of the Greenbridge apartment complex on Rosemary Street, displays the work of now-deceased UNC art professor Kimowan Metchewais.

Metchewais died July 29 after suffering from a brain tumor for most of his adult life.

He returned to Canada last spring to be with his family, said Leigh Suggs, LIGHT co-owner.

"It was his thing to go home to get better, and then to return," Suggs said. "But I think this time he knew he would not return."

A week before moving, Metchewais called Cindy Spuria, another LIGHT co-owner, asking her to display his work.

"I really felt compelled to do a show of his," Spuria said. "It is because he asked, but also because he was a fine artist. We were honored."

The show began in June and will end Sept. 24. LIGHT will also host a celebration of Metchewais' work Sept. 10 with a short film about the challenges he faced

after surgery paralyzed the left side of his body.

Suggs, a former student of Metchewais, said the show would give his friends and students the opportunity to see his work.

"As a student, you have your teachers, but you never see their art, what they're making," Suggs said.

"This is kind of making it whole, bringing it back full circle, for people who knew him but couldn't see his body of work."

The show includes "Grandmother's Bible," a series of images depicting his family's holy heirloom below printed cigarettes.

Another piece, "LUCKY STRIKE," portrays the bull's-eye logo of the tobacco company.

Spuria said Metchewais, an artist of Native American descent, often used tobacco imagery in his work because it was a medicinal plant in his culture.

The Ackland Art Museum recently acquired one of Metchewais' later inkjet pieces, "Fence," which will be on display starting in October as part of the exhibition "Adding to the Mix."

"The piece speaks of wide-open spaces and the West," said Emily Kass, the museum's director. Kass said the Ackland would

have continued to follow the work of Metchewais, whose career was young.

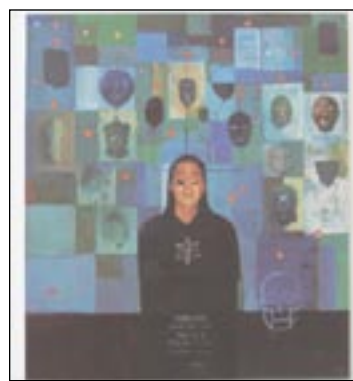
"People cared about him a lot, so we wanted to add a trace of his work in the collection," she said.

Suggs said that, as a professor, Metchewais was invested in his students.

"He was a student with you. He wanted to learn from you as much as you wanted to learn from him," she said.

"I can't imagine how many students were touched by him."

Contact the Arts Editor at arts@dailytarheel.com.



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Artist and former UNC art professor Kimowan Metchewais' work is featured in the LIGHT Art + Design studio on Rosemary Street.

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