

Tattoo art takes center stage at Delta Ink

LAILA CASIANO

OPINION EDITOR

The Delta Ink Exhibition, the companion show for the 2025 Delta National Small Print Exhibition (DNSPE), showcased the artistry of tattoo and body art through interactive displays, synthetic skin canvases and live demonstrations.

Designed to complement the DNSPE's exploration and focus on ink-based art, the exhibit highlighted and featured 12 tattoo artists as works of fine art and forms of self-expression. The exhibition had three main components: the "Pound of Flesh" canvases displayed on the gallery walls, synthetic skins pinned to the walls and an interactive art piece for patrons.

Lydia Dildilian, an assistant professor of painting and curator for the Delta Ink Exhibition, said that because the DNSPE focused on the relationship with ink, she wanted to expand the theme by curating a companion show featuring tattoo artists.

"I really wanted to feature tattoo artists because I think art is such a complicated and beautiful field, and it has a huge impact on so many aspects of life," Dildilian said. "Tattooing is one of those things that people don't always consider 'art' with a capital 'A.'"

She said tattooing is the most accessible form of art and that traditional artwork can be expensive and take up space. Additionally, she said tattoo art allows the body to serve as its own canvas.

"If you love something enough to have it permanently on your skin, that's powerful," Dildilian said. "That's a big conversation we're having with students—rethinking what counts as art and how artists sustain themselves."

The exhibition featured 12 artists except one from the Arkansas Delta region.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICKOLE ASHLOCK
Panelists speak at the Artist Talk: Flesh + Fiber Panel Discussion with Lydia Dildilian, Madeline McMahan and Robyn Wall.

Nickole Ashlock, a tattoo artist for the Aletha Tattoo Atelier shop in Houston, lived in Jonesboro from 2004 to 2021 and plans to return in April.

She said she first became interested in tattooing after meeting a heavily tattooed man in Arkansas who did it as a secondary job. She asked him questions about tattoos and he educated her. At 14, she decided she wanted to be a tattoo artist.

"I became obsessed with it, the design, the art, the craft, all of it," Ashlock said.

She said she felt honored to be featured in the exhibition, especially since she never expected to be displayed in a fine arts gallery as a tattoo artist.

"Tattoo art isn't always thought of as being in the same line as the fine arts, so having my work be displayed is an honor and a privilege," Ashlock said.

She said she encourages students interested in tattoo art to take as many art classes as they can.

"If I had done things

differently, I would have taken more art classes in my college education because there's always going to be something from those classes that you can apply towards tattooing," Ashlock said. "Always be open to educating yourself."

Another featured artist, Shelby Tarver-Kent, owns Stingerz Tattoo Studio in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas.

She began tattooing in 2020 under an apprenticeship with Bewitched Body Art but had always been a part of the tattoo industry through family, particularly her father, who owned a tattoo shop.

She said she initially never wanted to be a tattoo artist but changed her mind after falling in love with the artistry.

"It made me so anxious just thinking of the permanence of it! But I needed to find a way to be an artist every day, so I decided to give it a try and I instantly fell in love with the work," Tarver-Kent said.

She said her work is



Photo by Laila Casiano | Opinion Editor
The Delta Ink Exhibition's display of synthetic skin featured original pieces from artists.

influenced by childhood comforts, including fairies, flowers, surrealism and "all things magical."

She said she loves the whimsy. "It excites me to mix nostalgia alongside something that constantly requires effort

and growth to do good work," Tarver-Kent said. "Little me would be so happy to know she draws her favorite things all the time and gives them to people who appreciate them!"

However, she said she wishes more people understood that

this career is very "all or nothing" and oftentimes becomes hard to balance as a business and brand.

CONTINUED:
TATTOO, 4A

CAMPUS CRIME

SHAILEY WOOLDRIDGE

NEWS EDITOR

Feb. 24 | 2:08 a.m.

Officer Christopher Sewell was out with a stranded motorist that had a strap come undone on a car dolly that was hauling a silver Dodge passenger car. The car was in the outside lane on Johnson Avenue headed eastbound.

Sewell activated his patrol car lights and got behind the Ford truck hauling the car to keep the occupants from getting hit by a passing vehicle.

As he was out contacting the occupants he could see they needed assistance getting the car they were hauling correctly back on the car dolly.

While helping the occupants get the car corrected and re-secured on the car dolly, a vehicle hit his patrol unit before skidding to a stop just past Sewell and the occupants of the Dodge. Sewell then radioed into

dispatch and said his patrol unit was hit in the rear and he was going to check on the occupants in the Maroon Nissan Rogue that had collided with the patrol car.

Sewell made contact with the arrestee. He was the only one in the vehicle at the time of the accident.

The arrestee said he was okay and did not need emergency medical services (EMS).

Dispatch called the Jonesboro Fire department (JFD) and EMS to the location.

The occupants that were hauling the Dodge car were not harmed during the incident nor was their vehicle struck and they were able to leave the scene.

Sewell started working on directing traffic at this time.

JFD and EMS arrived on the scene and checked on the arrestee. The Jonesboro Police Department (JPD)

arrived on the scene and told Sewell they were going to

conduct the crash investigation.

While Sewell was directing traffic, Lieutenant Daniel Bradway told JPD he noticed the odor of intoxicants coming from the arrestee.

JPD performed sobriety testing on the arrestee. After the tests were performed, the driver was arrested for driving while intoxicated and transported by JPD.

Both the Nissan Rogue and the patrol vehicle had to be towed from the scene. The police vehicle was towed to the University Police Department at Bradway's request.

Feb. 24 | 12:16 a.m.

While assisting with a traffic collision at the intersection of East Johnson Avenue and University Loop, Sergeant Ryan Smith was struck by a passing motorist.

He was directing traffic when the vehicle approached from his left side, failing to yield to

the officer emergency lights or the officers acting as flag men.

The vehicle failed to slow and continued in the lane of traffic Smith was in.

He was able to get out of the way but his hand was struck by the vehicle.

Once the scene was cleared, he was complaining of pain and swelling of the hand and wrist.

He was advised to call the workplace incident nurse number and to have it looked at.

Smith transported himself to St. Bernards Hospital for treatment.

He was able to get the driver information, however he did not call it in to dispatch due to the situation.

Bradway identified the driver and vehicle in this incident from body camera footage.

Feb. 23 | 1:33 p.m.

Officer Robert Kary responded to The Village in reference to a possible

domestic disturbance.

Upon arrival, contact was made with the complainant who said there was loud banging and screaming coming from apartment 5.

Upon arrival at apartment 5, Kary contacted the suspect who said she was frustrated because her daughter lost her shoe and was trying to find the shoe in her room.

The suspect was told the noise was excessive and the University Police department would have to do a report on the matter.

Feb. 22 | 2:31 a.m.

Officer Jacob Foster was patrolling Collegiate Park when he noticed the South Caraway gate to Collegiate Park was knocked over.

Upon reviewing the cameras, he saw the associated person drive up to the South Caraway gate to Collegiate Park in a blue Kia Optima and key in at approximately 2:23 a.m.

The suspect drove a red GMC Acadia. She followed the associated person through the gate, attempting to piggyback, and drove straight through the gate knocking it over without slowing down or stopping to try and prevent hitting the gate.

The suspect and the associated person then parked in front of Collegiate Park building 2 and talked for a few minutes before heading into a room. Upon inspecting the suspects vehicle, Foster noticed an open can of alcohol in the cup holder. There was no visible damage to the gate. The suspect received a university referral for having alcohol on campus.

Feb. 22 | 2:42 p.m.

Officer Travis Harwood responded to Centennial Bank Stadium due to a fire alarm notification.

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CAMPUS CRIME, 4A