

September 19, 2006

The O'Neal School Unveils Mobile Sculpture

Southern Pines –The unveiling of a mobile sculpture located in the McMurray Library took place during the annual fall picnic at The O'Neal School on Thursday, September 7, 2006. Crafted by Paul Penny, the sculpture is the first purchase of North Carolina artwork in compliance with the Bob Timberlake Grant, which was awarded to The O'Neal School three years ago.

As a recipient of the Bob Timberlake Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Timberlake donated seed money and pieces of art from North Carolina artists to start a permanent collection of North Carolina art at the school. To help build the fund to purchase such artwork, the Timberlakes donate a print each year that is included in the school's annual auction. The proceeds from the print are accumulated into a special account.

One of the stipulations of the grant is that a student committee is appointed to make the selections from North Carolina artists to add to the school's collection. For the first purchase, the students chose Mr. Paul Penny, an artist who makes fanciful copper wind sculptures at AeroKinetic Studios in Holly Springs. On March 31, 2006, Mr. Penny visited The O'Neal School and met with the student committee to get ideas for his sculpture he was commissioned to craft.

Mr. Penny states his synopsis of the project:

When I met with the students and staff of the O'Neal School, I asked them to share with me thoughts about what makes O'Neal "different". Students talked about the tremendous breadth of academic, athletic, artistic and community involvement activities available to them, and about the broad participation by students in these activities. Administrators and staff talked about the diversity of the student body, the ways the three divisions interact and support one another, the degree of interaction between upper school students and the younger students that you just don't get in public schools.

As I thought about what I had heard, these key themes solidified:

- *Diversity – of thought, of students, of activities*
- *Three Divisions – independent, but mutually supporting*
- *Change – students, faculty, staff and the school constantly growing and evolving*

I spent several weeks imagining designs that would evoke these themes. I also had to consider the practical constraints of the space. The design would need to visually compliment the structure and colors of the library. It needed to be virtually silent. It needed to be not so active



As a Timberlake Grant first purchase, a wind sculpture crafted by North Carolina artist, Paul Penny resides in the McMurray Library at The O'Neal School. It was produced under the influence of the following three themes that the O'Neal School represents: Diversity, Three Divisions and Change.

that it distracts students from the work at hand – but needed to provide enough interest to spark the occasional “daydream” when library users relaxed and observed it for minutes at a time.

I eventually settled on the design you see installed. The three copper hoops represent the three divisions – lower, middle, upper. These tiers move independently, yet support one another. While the lower tiers hang from the upper ones, the mass of the lower tiers provides a stabilizing effect on the entire mobile. The sizes of these tiers, and the discs they support, grow from bottom to top, symbolizing the physical and intellectual growth of students and they rise through the divisions. The colors of the spectrum reflect the diversity of the students, faculty, staff and school as a whole. While there is a “primary” motion designed into each tier, each one reacts to the changing air currents in the space and turns in unpredictable ways, sometimes reversing its rotation in relation to the other tiers.

It was truly a joy for me to work with the students and staff of the O’Neal School in creating this piece. My wish is that it brings joy to many people in the years to come.



On March 31, 2006, Holly Springs artist, Paul Penny visits The O’Neal School and receives input from the Timberlake Grant student committee for his future project.

Members of the student committee are: fifth graders, Eugene Zang and Mime Ke; eighth grader, Gray Hodsdon; ninth graders, Chris Maynor and Christopher Waddell; eleventh grader, Caroline Cordell and O’Neal Senior, Leah Kelly. All of the students reside in the Southern Pines/ Pinehurst area with the exception of Gray Hodsdon who lives in Sanford and Leah Kelly from West End.

Lynn Bowness, the school librarian is ecstatic about the library’s new addition. “The library has little wall space to accommodate artwork. The addition of this mobile provides color and movement – it finishes the library.”

As a part of its present strategic plan, The O’Neal School is committed to providing – at every grade level – a broad range of opportunities for students to both participate in and learn appreciation for the Arts. An independent, college preparatory school for pre-kindergarten thru grade 12, The O’Neal School is celebrating 35 years of dedication to the development of academic excellence, strength of character, and physical well-being of its students. For more information about the O’Neal School, contact Alice Droppers, Director of Admissions at (910) 692-6920 or hop onto www.OnealSchool.org.

For more information on Paul Penny and his artwork, visit: www.aerokinetic.com