Science Societies

Communicating science through art—An exhibition and symposium

By Dan Richter

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Kurtz

Peace/Chernozem, soil and gesso, 2022, Kirsten Kurtz.

Soils have been closely associated with artistic expression for millennia. Soil-derived pigments were used in paleolithic paintings that are >10,000 years old in caves of several continents. Poetry has used soil and land imagery to communicate the significance of seasonal cycles of soils and farm work and the beauty and fragility of the land.

The theme of the upcoming 2022 ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD on 6–9 November is "Communication and Public Engagement for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet." How appropriate that this meeting will include an exhibition and symposium entitled "Communicating Science through Art."

This will be the fourth Annual Meeting in the last decade with a session on soil science and art (previously in 2013, 2015, and 2019) although the 2022 exhibition and symposium will be the most ambitious. Over this time, an international soil art movement has emerged and continues to grow. Of recent note is a painting by Kirsten Kurtz entitled *Peace/Chernozem*, shown here, painted with pigments from the Chernozem soil (Mollisol) in support of invasion-ravaged Ukrainians, whose productive agriculture is based on Chernozems that cover nearly two-thirds of the country.

This interdivisional symposium is slated to feature Kirsten Kurtz speaking on collaborative art, Jenifer Wightman on microbial climate changes, Michael Walker on science and storytelling, and Karen Vaughn and Yamina Pressler on the use of social media to communicate soil science through soil art. Plans are being made for an

exhibit hall gallery of artists' work, and artists-in-residence with multiple events throughout the meeting, including a soil-painting event where you can try your hand at soil painting on a community canvas. Tuesday evening will feature an open-mic event with several participants. Efforts are being taken to arrange events with the Baltimore community. A Bring-Your-Own-Art Exhibit is also being organized as is a multi-reader rendition of Virgil's *Georgics* (email Dan Richter, Send Message, to volunteer).

The project is being led by Dr. Clay Robinson (Send Message). Please contact him by 22 July if you are interested in participating and/or have questions.

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