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Ferris hosts exhibit of large-scale paintings

BIG RAPIDS – “Rappart,” an exhibition of paintings by Detroit native Jim Stella, will be shown Feb. 8 through March 4 at Ferris State University’s Rankin Art Gallery.

In conjunction with the exhibit, a “Night of Art and Theater” will be held on Feb. 10. An Artist’s Reception at 6:30 p.m. in the gallery will address poetry, language, communication and design to be followed by a benefit production of “The Vagina Monologues” at 7:30 p.m. in Williams Auditorium. Tickets for the V-Day program are \$6 for students, \$10 for general admission and \$20 for sponsorship level reserved seating, and are available at the auditorium box office. All proceeds benefit Women’s Information Services, Inc., of Big Rapids.

Stella began his art education in sculpture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. He also was a cum laude sculpture graduate from the University of Michigan’s School of Art. His interest then turned to painting, and after attending Detroit’s Center for Creative Studies, he traveled the world to gather ideas and influences for his entirely self-taught techniques.

“Painting gives me a larger scale that I can work on without the tools needed for sculpture, like the welding and the grinders, and I can express myself better,” said Stella. “My mind works faster trying to put something down with a paint brush than trying to work on a three-dimensional sculpture, because the sculpture takes longer to do. Basically, I want to put my ideas down while they’re fresh in my mind.”

Stella’s large-scale paintings, some of which take up an entire wall, are layered with information and language that is forever fresh in appearance. A singular theme is slowly revealed through the collage of bold graphics, bright colors and stiff text.

“These images come from everyday life, inspired by what might happen on any particular day, or from listening to people and seeing how challenging, confusing and stressful the world can be at times,” he explained. “I feel that if you take the time to actually sit down and look at the art, you can find some fun and some humor in it, but you can also find a lot of truth. And that’s what I want to convey, a sense of empathy and connection with the everyday world.”

Rankin Art Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The exhibit is free and open to the public.