

fine arts

ARTISTS

LESLIE MUTCHLER, ARTIST



TADZIO KOELB, NOVELIST



JASON URBAN, ARTIST



IN RESIDENCE

BEN DARWISH, COMPOSER



JAMES CREWS, POET



Photos by Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Caldera Arts Center gives public glimpse of artists' work during Open Studio event

By David Jasper
The Bulletin

Many readers may already know of Caldera Arts Center, a cluster of gorgeous, high-ceilinged buildings, art studios and A-frame cabins nestled between Suttle Lake and Blue Lake west of Sisters. Founded in 1996 by Dan Wieden (of Wieden+Kennedy ad agency) and wife Bonnie Wieden, the summer

camp's intention was, and remains, fostering creativity in young people from Portland and Central Oregon.

Rather than let such a facility and idyllic setting sit unused in the off-season, Caldera began its Artist in Residence program in 2001, treating visual artists, poets, dancers, composers, you name it, to four-week stints each January through March. Caldera supplies the space, the

artists supply the creativity.

Want a window on this world? Each month during the winter residency, Caldera hosts Open Studios, two-hour events during which the public can visit and see how the artists have been using their time in Central Oregon. The next event is Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. (see "If you go").

The January crop of artists comprises three visual artists, two writers and a musician.

James Crews, 30, has been writing poetry since he was a third-grader growing up in St. Louis. A graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of

Wisconsin, Crews recently worked for the service program AmeriCorps VISTA in Portland, where he's lived for three years.

Crews is using his time at Caldera to work on the manuscript for his second poetry collection. His first, "The Book of What Stays," will be published this summer.

Visitors to Caldera can expect Crews to read some of his in-progress new work, which "explores memory and the instability of memory," said Crews, adding that he's interested in writing poetry that doesn't scare off readers, "poetry that is somewhat understandable."

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Fellow writer **Tadzio Koelb**, 39, is working on the manuscript for a new novel. His first manuscript is called "Bad of Country," a literal translation of the French term for homesickness, and is about expatriates, "people who live outside the normal structures that would define them, and how they decide who they are."

They say write what you know, and Koelb has lived in many places, among them, Spain, Rwanda, Madagascar, France, Belgium and England, where he attended the University of East Anglia, earning a Master of Arts in creative writing, which carries a similar cultural currency in England as the Iowa Writers Workshop does in the States. He currently hangs his hat in Brooklyn, where he lived as a child until age 12, and works as a reviewer for such British publications as *The Guardian* and *Times Literary Supplement*.

He's starting on a new project at Caldera. "Going back to the beginning of the process is like going back to dating after you've been married for a long time. It's very tentative and uncertain, and you're not sure if it's going to turn into anything."

Pianist and composer **Ben Darwish**, 26, is a graduate of University of Oregon and, like Crews, a resident of Portland. He earns his living giving music lessons and as a professional musician wearing many hats: writing jazz compositions for his Ben Darwish Trio and leading an eight-piece Afrobeat band called *Commotion*.

He's using his residency to work on jazz compositions and a folk concept album. At the moment, it has a loose story line about a farmer who needs to go underground to find water, "so it's part fantasy," he said.

"I'm a really social person, but I'm fine with the solitude of this," Darwish said of Caldera. The artists dine together once a week, and he likes the company. "I hang out with a lot of musicians, but I don't hang out with a lot of other-medium artists. I'm the only musician here, so it's cool to hang out with the writers, it's cool to hang out with the visual artists."

If you go

What: Open Studio

When: Saturday 1 to 3 p.m.; talks begin at 1:20 p.m.; additional Open Studio events on Feb. 19 and March 19

Where: Caldera Arts Center, 31500 Blue Lake Drive, at the west end of Suttle Lake, off U.S. Highway 20, west of Black Butte Ranch

Cost: Free

Contact: www.calderaarts.org or 541-595-0956

Collage artist **Val Britton**, 33, of San Francisco, echoes those feelings, saying that there's a "similarity in these different disciplines, like the process of writing and being a composer."

Britton creates unique land-mass shapes and map-like lines on paper, inspired partly by the death of her truck-driver father when she was still a teenager. Before she left for grad school at California College of the Arts in 2004, her family gave her a road atlas, which became a sort of compass in her creative process as well.

"I was sort of looking for a way to connect to his story, which was sort of mysterious to me, (and) his travels," she explained. "I started using the atlas, projecting sections onto these bigger sheets of paper, just as a formal device to start new drawings." For her, maps represent more than just physical places, but "psychological places and emotional places as well. Life is a journey, and the telling of your life as a journey is very significant for me."

Next door, husband and wife artists **Jason Urban**, 35, and **Leslie Mutchler**, 30, are sharing space.

Judging from her artist's statement, in which Mutchler said her "research is a theoretical and practical investigation of order and chaos filtered through my own desire and drive for order," that pursuit of order seems to be winning the day. The studio is tidy to say the least.

The two met when Mutchler was enrolled in grad school at Temple University's Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, where fellow printmaker Urban was teaching at the time. Now they live and teach in Austin, Texas.

Print-media artist Urban's work at Caldera involves turning images into 3-D objects using his original photos, cutting and reshaping them to add dimension. "I'm interested in op-art and optical experience," he said. Without a press, "I had to find a way to work with my ideas. That's the thing about Caldera. It's a chance to do something you wouldn't normally do."

When he and Mutchler do residencies together, they work side by side, feeding off of each other's ideas on their respective projects.

Mutchler and Urban "feel very lucky to be a part of this," Mutchler said. "The experience of being at Caldera the last couple of weeks has been freeing ... It's nice being able to come to a place like Caldera and get a month of peace and quiet."

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