

Haunty's 'Take a Bow!' honors philanthropists



Alex Haunty with "Take a Bow."

Photo from Martin Jenich/Overture Center.

Haunty sells his artwork at InspiringArtByAlex.com and locally at *The Regal Find*, and art shows such as the *MOM Creating For Causes* to be held Dec. 6-7.

by **Katherin Perreth**
Times-Tribune

When doctors told Marybeth Haunty her son, Alex, wouldn't ever walk or talk, they forgot to mention fly. They would have been wrong on that count, too.

Haunty, a 22-year-old Middleton entrepreneur, is known locally for his colorful paintings and note cards, hugs, goodwill, and loquacious conversation. But for over a year he had to keep secret his role in the Overture Center's 10Fest Celebration, held the last weekend in September.

"Sometimes I got so excited that I let the cats out of the bag," Haunty confessed in the speech he gave at the Overture Center private reception to honor philanthropists Pleasant Rowland and Jerry Frautschi.

The "cats" were that staff had commissioned Haunty to paint a gift of thanks to Rowland and Frautschi on behalf of the greater Madison community, Overture Center spokesperson Robert Chappell said.

With CEO Ted DeDee, Haunty unveiled the painting, entitled *Take A Bow*, to the obvious delight of Rowland, Frautschi and the other 40 people present.

"There wasn't a dry eye in the house," exclaimed Chappell. Especially after Haunty and Rowland exchanged a heartfelt hug. Haunty lauded Rowland and Frautschi as "lights of this community and this building," asserting in his speech, "I want to be a giver just like you."

Indeed, Haunty, who has a cognitive disability, initially grabbed the attention of Overture staff because of his personal generosity, explained Wayne Glowac, Vice President of Sales and Marketing. Haunty regularly purchases group tickets to Broadway shows through proceeds from his artwork sales. He offers the tickets gratis to students with special needs: friends from the transition program at Middleton High School, as well as fellow students attending Edgewood College's Cutting Edge Program.

“In his own way, Alex is as generous as (Rowland and Frautschi) are, using his time, energy and finances to give his friends an artistic experience they might not have had,” Glowac noted.

Although Haunty said he specializes in “bright, whimsical acrylic paintings, to touch people, to make them happy,” the commissioned painting reflects the expectant nature of a red-curtained empty stage. He drew inspiration for it by taking photos of every Overture stage, then brainstormed with his art mentors, he said.

“I thought of ‘Take A Bow’ on my own, because I thought it went well with the tenth anniversary,” Haunty observed, adding that another item fitting the gala evening was his tux with tails. “I wanted to look snazzy and have some pizzazz!”

He finished the painting fall 2013, but then it remained hidden in an Overture Center office. It will now hang on the administration wall to inspire staff and administrative visitors alike, and as an example of personal generosity, Glowac said.

In addition, Overture Center has replicated the painting on lapel pins and note cards. Donors have been rewarded with the pins, staff will now be wearing them, and new donors will receive the thank you cards, Chappell said.

Glowac’s team labored behind the scenes for months to pull off the three-day celebration, he said, but of all the work that went into the event, “I’m most proud of the few minutes Alex got to present his painting to Pleasant and Jerry,” Glowac observed. “It was the right chord, for the right people, at the right time. It’s gonna last me a lifetime.”

As for Haunty? He feels triply honored, he said: to have the opportunity to paint the gift, to work with Overture Center staff, and that his painting is now being utilized in so many ways.

“You know, in Hollywood, they have a monument wall, or their names in stars that represent them,” Haunty concluded. “I feel like having the painting hanging in the administration office is like my own star - remembering me and honoring me.”

Typical of Haunty, he remembered something else to say just as this reporter was hopping on her bike to head home.

“My bosses have told me that my presence changes lives and the atmosphere,” he said with a face-splitting smile.

His bosses couldn’t have been more right.



Photo from Martin Jenich/Overture Center.

Alex Haunty’s “Take a Bow!” honored philanthropists Pleasant Rowland and Jerry Frautschi.