

Together on the plains

New exhibit at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center explores the life on the Chisholm Trail

By Linda Provost
The Duncan Banner

The newest exhibit to grace the gallery of the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center really lived up to the title given by artist Jennifer Cocoma Hustis — Symbiosis on the Chisholm Trail. When a Duncan resident helped the Heritage Center connect with Hustis.

The dictionary says "Symbiosis" means a "state of living together."

Stacy Cramer Moore, executive director of the Heritage Center said they were lucky to have people in the community who find artists for them.

"We have a lot of our local residents who bring us these amazing artists," she said. "Nancy Litsch who a lot of people know around town — she does all kinds of wonderful charity work — she introduced us to our artist Jennifer Hustis



Toni Hopper/Special to The Banner

Jennifer Cocoma Hustis and her husband, Mark get help from Ron Mulkey to hang one of the largest pieces in the collection — "Birds of a Feather."

who is from the Edmond. Nancy has collected several of her pieces and felt like she would be a great fit for the Heritage Center and what we are trying to do here and the kinds of artists we try to bring in."

Turns out Litsch was right and the Heritage Center staff has been working for several months in preparation for Hustis work, which Cramer Moore said was beautiful.

"Her style is very unique... she does traditional paintings but they're very vibrant and kind of abstract — very dynamic

colors, they're very striking," she said. "She also does these wonderful multimedia pieces where she incorporates (things like) pete, and natural fibers like feathers and horse hair, and found items like bones, skulls and makes these wonderful collage items."

One of the impressive works is "Birds of a Feather" which measures about 96" x 84"

"She did this really cool mobile that's suspended from the ceiling that's a silhouette of a horse and has these horses and birds — it's just so cool," said Cramer Moore.

The theme of the symbiosis was picked by Hustis during her study of the area according to her artist's statement.

"Throughout this exhibit I hope you find ways to see how symbiotic or 'living together' relationships can

hinder or help life," she wrote. "As I researched the Chisholm Trail for the exhibit, I found myself intrigued with brave stories of daring survival. I also noticed, at this time, photos where long exposure portraits, and stories were often illustrated."

Her love of nature and wants to show the soul of all living things, the Earth included.

"In this solo exhibition of my art, I use symbolic imagery of animals, nature

and the artist's instruments to remind us of the importance of the artist as a historic messenger," Hustis wrote. "My goal is that you leave contemplating how you approach life with respect of the innate knowledge of nature."

Cramer Moore said living together on the Chisholm Trail is what made the area what it is today.

"The Chisholm Trail was a start of a different kind of symbiosis here in the Great Plains, in that we had a new 'artery' to get living things into this area that had never really interacted before," she said.

The exhibit opens Jan. 5, 2017 and goes until Feb. 25 in the main gallery.

There will be some chances to talk with Hustis but the dates are still being hammered out.

"We will an art class with her but we are still researching the date, it's going to be in February," Cramer Moore said. "It's going to be a hands-on class, for all ages and it's going to be Valentine's Day themed — kind of like Victorian Valentines, a little water-color painting but for all skill levels."

An artists reception will also be announced for a later date.

For more information visit the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center located at 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway or their website www.onthechisholmtrail.com or call at (580) 252-6692.

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