

Floyd Bettiga

A College of the Redwoods Success Story



College of the Redwoods is naming its Art Gallery in the new Creative Arts complex in honor of emeritus professor Floyd Bettiga. Over his many years in Humboldt County, Mr. Bettiga mentored promising students, artists, and community members and was a dedicated advocate for the arts. Bettiga was also instrumental in establishing the College of the Redwoods permanent art collection, which allows CR to share carefully curated artworks with students, faculty, staff, and visitors and preserve these pieces for future generations to enjoy.

“The naming of college property or buildings is a considerable honor, and it is important that we choose individuals who have made important contributions to the teaching and public service mission of College of the Redwoods,” said CR President Keith Flamer. “Floyd Bettiga was integral, not only to the development of CR’s Art Department, but also to the culture of art appreciation and creativity that flourishes in our district.”

History

Floyd Bettiga was the youngest of five children born to immigrant parents and grew up in Humboldt County. After graduating from Ferndale high school, he attended Santa Rosa Junior College and Humboldt State University before serving as an active member and reservist in the US. Army. At the conclusion of his enlistment, he returned to Humboldt County to create and share his passion for the arts.

By 1960 he was teaching art at Eureka High School. He also advised the school’s new art club, considered at the time to be the “newest and perhaps most unusual club to be chartered at Eureka High School.” The innovative club offered students opportunities to expand their understanding and appreciation of the arts while also experimenting with their own work. Bettiga also created opportunities for student club members to share their art in the community and fostered their success however he could.

Bettiga also supported older aspiring artists. He taught drawing and painting classes through the local adult education program and in 1965 he was hired by the newly established College of the Redwoods. That year he was also featured in a one man show at the International Market Place in San Francisco, the city’s newest gallery “devoted to bringing the public’s attention to the works of fine, local, national and foreign arts.” Over the years, his work was also represented nationally and internationally and was often purchased by private collectors.

Despite attaining professional success, Bettiga continued his own studies by attending classes in San Francisco, Mexico, and Europe. He also continued to support local artists and organizations in his community. He regularly donated artwork and volunteered at countless non-profits, including the Redwood Art Association, Humboldt Arts Council, Humboldt Cultural Center, Humboldt Botanical Garden Foundation, Westhaven Center for the Arts, Humboldt County Historical Society, Friends of the Clarke Museum and more. He played key roles in establishing the Romano Gabriel “Sculpture Garden” in Eureka’s historic Old Town area, the Humboldt Culture Center, and the Morris Graves Museum of Art.

Mr. Bettiga organized the first art show at College of the Redwoods, established the Floyd Bettiga Art Scholarship and during his tenure started the permanent art collection at College of the Redwoods, donating several of his own pieces. He also built strong relationships with local artists and worked tirelessly to obtain a majority of the artwork now housed in the collection.

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Local Recognition

Over the years Bettiga was recognized by the Humboldt Arts Council for his “Outstanding contributions to the cultural life of the community.” He was also honored for his contributions to KEET Television and received Faculty of the Year and Outstanding Alumni awards from College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University, respectively.

Mr. Bettiga retired from College of the Redwoods in 1992 and passed away in 2018 at the age of eighty-six. College of the Redwoods is proud to recognize him permanently in the naming of the new arts gallery.

“It was my privilege to serve with CR emeritus professor Floyd Bettiga for over 10 years on the Humboldt County Arts Council,” Sally Bettiga wrote in a letter regarding the new arts building. “He inspired and mentored North Coast artists for decades. I am thrilled to see his legacy honored with the naming of College of the Redwoods’ newest art gallery in his memory.”

CR’s new 29,888-square-foot facility replaces the former Creative Arts building, which was constructed in 1974, and will allow the college to make several environmental and instructional upgrades to the learning environment. It is scheduled to be completed in summer of 2023. The gallery will feature faculty and student exhibits in addition to temporary shows highlighting regional and national artists whose work is often tied to specific classes and/or areas of instruction.

College of the Redwoods Permanent Art Collection –

Students and visitors to College of the Redwoods campus can happen upon works by award winning Plein Air Oil painter Jim McVicker in an administrator’s office, stroll down a hallway to find a three-dimensional copper landscape by Kinetic Sculpture race founder and artist Hobart Brown or find one of a kind wheel thrown pottery by nationally recognized ceramicist Peggy Loudon in the library. “The permanent collection supports joy on campus,” observed College of the Redwoods art instructor Shannon Sullivan, whose has contributed her own ceramic and acrylic pieces to the collection.

Artist and College of the Redwoods instructor Floyd Bettiga spent several years working with local artists to build College of the Redwoods permanent art collection. The college now hosts over one hundred art pieces, consisting of paintings, mix media artwork, ceramics, photography and more. These works are placed throughout the College of the Redwoods campus.

Many of the artists have been featured locally, nationally, and internationally. Melvin Schuler, better known for his large, impactful abstract sculptures, had one of his watercolors purchased by the Smithsonian in Washington DC and nationally renowned Native American painter and sculptor Brian Tripp, a recipient of the California Living Heritage Award from the Alliance for California Traditional Arts in 2018, contributed multiple pieces to the collection. Bettiga, who is featured in collections across the US and in Europe, also donated several of his own pieces.

“Honoring Professor Bettiga by naming the new arts gallery for him acknowledges the tremendous and long-term impact he had with the establishment of the permanent art collection at College of the Redwoods, and through his influence on the arts and art education throughout the community,” CR Trustee Carol Mathews said.