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Dr. Zenon Duda lit votive candles that are part of his sculpture installation, "Requiem for the Pawns of War," while assembling it Thursday night at Buckner Brewing Co.'s Riverview Room. The display will be open today from 6 to 10 p.m.

Constructing destruction

Local doctor's sculpture installation takes on war

By MATT SANDERS
Southeast Missourian

Throughout the centuries artists have known their work can make a powerful statement, politically and socially. Cape Girardeau physician and sculptor Dr. Zenon Duda is no different.

Tonight Duda will unveil a massive 15-by-45-foot sculpture installation called "Requiem for the Pawns of War" in Buckner Brewing Co.'s Riverview Room.

The name says it all — Duda hopes to impart the real cost of innocent human life under the direction of the power elite in war.

"The theme deals more immediately with what is going on now, and more broadly with what has always gone on," said Duda.

In Duda's view, war is most often a tool used by the upper echelons of power for some selfish gain, but the tools used to prosecute wars are the largely innocent citizens of a nation and those they're enlisted to destroy.

The savvy Duda wants the look of the installation to be largely a sur-

prise, so it will have the most immediate and strong impact on the viewer. Those going to see the work will only know the theme, not the device used to convey it.

Futility of war

Duda recognizes that the theme of his piece, which might very well only be shown tonight, might not be popular with many in Southeast Missouri. While he shares some conservative political views like opposition to socialism and the welfare state, he knows he may be labeled a left winger for his anti-war stance.

But for Duda the subject of the piece is too weighty to ignore.

"This is about the futility of war and the control of the many by the few, and I hope that in some way the images I create will bear on that point," Duda said.

He has been acquainted with the high human cost of war his entire life. His Ukrainian parents saw horrors at the

hands of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia before coming to the United States. Of course, that was before he was born, but he was alive during

Vietnam, during which some of his older brother's friends were killed in combat.

They were men he put on pedestals, his protectors and friends.

"To see them die was very moving," said Duda. "And the war ends and it turns out to be a lot of crap, and guys died."

Duda chokes up as he remembers a particularly vivid scene at one of those funerals. A mother of a slain soldier, overwrought with grief, jumped into the hole dug for her son's burial place to be with the young man even in death.

"That was a very strong image to see," Duda recalled. "It broke up everybody who was both privileged and unfortunate enough to witness it."

Today's combat, said Duda, isn't much different — a war entered into through misleading rhetoric in which the cost is greater than the gain.

Doctor with art training

Creating "Requiem" wasn't just a political whim for the doctor. He's a respected sculptor in his own right, having displayed his work in several area shows and studied with Dr. Jean A. Chapman and Dr. Ed Smith. Duda also created a sculpture in 2004 displayed in Honduras as part of a United Nations project.

And like any artist, Duda just hopes

MORE FIRST FRIDAYS

Arts Council of Southeast Missouri

■ The Arts Council of Southeast Missouri, 32 N. Main St., will play host to exhibitions by Cobden, Ill., painter Lee Spalt and Bailey, Colo., photographer Angie Buckley, with an opening reception from 5 to 8 p.m.

The artists of the Visual Arts Cooperative will also display their work in the arts council's Jean A. Chapman Gallery. Call 334-9233 for more information.

Garden Gallery

■ Garden Gallery, 833 Broadway, will continue its December exhibition of representational watercolors by Hannibal, Mo., artist Brenda Beck Fisher from noon to 9 p.m.

Call 332-7123 for more information.

Fusion Glassworks Studio

■ The Fusion Glassworks Studio, 823 Broadway, will feature demonstrations of glass bead-making by Michael Gard from 6 to 9 p.m.

Gard will also take sign-ups for spring glass making classes. For more information, call 517-8130.

Fountain Street Gallery

■ Contemporary art spot Fountain Street Gallery, 34 N. Fountain St., will hold a First Friday opening from 6 to 9 p.m., with work by gallery members Jake Wells, Hannah Hart, Utahna Hancock, Kathy Smith, Norma Fisk, Rachel Martin and Sara Riley.

The gallery will also feature the silk and canvas work of Columbia, Mo., artist Jesse Lawson in the gallery's Willow Gallery.

Call 275-3194 for more information.

Edward Bernard Gallery

■ Contemporary glass art gallery Edward Bernard, 107 West Drive, will hold a First Friday reception from 6 to 9 p.m., featuring the music of classical guitarist Bill McCaig.

The gallery will also display its collection of fine art glass.

For more information, call 332-7733.

The Artist Studio

■ The Artist Studio, 38A N. Main St., will hold an opening reception from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Signups will also be taken for the studio's upcoming workshop, Experimenting with Acrylics, which begins Jan. 10.

Call 651-4464 for more information.

Gallery 1.2.5

■ Gallery 1.2.5, 125 Main St., will feature its collection of prints, oils and accessories from 4 to 8 p.m.

Call 335-2699 for more information.

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— Dr. Zenon Duda

that his work will mean something to those who see it, even if they don't agree with his politics.

"Here's the thing — the purpose of an artist is to make art and to convey a message to others through art," Duda said. "And if done well, that message will communicate with other people and possibly alter their life in some way or get them to reassess what's going on in their lives for their own improvement."

"Of course, it's not for me to determine how someone can be improved, but we periodically need to take a look at ourselves and the world around us."

Duda's work can be seen from 6 to 10 p.m. today. For more information, call 334-4677.