

Artist manifests bicycle mythology



Photo ALEXIA STOUT-LANG

Kat Dison usually creates sculptures out of unusual objects. But recently she decided to try her hand at painting. She designed an image of a Mayan god riding a bicycle for a wall at The Hub.

Alexia Stout-Lang

News Editor

A Mayan vision serpent has taken up residence on campus.

What began as a simple bike repair shop known as The Hub, located in the damp basement of 5301 Charlotte Street, is now home to the mythical creature.

Kat Dison, painter, sculptor and bicycle mechanic at The Hub, is its creator.

"I just thought it looked cool," Dison said describing the bicycle-riding serpent she is meticulously painting on the wall of the repair shop.

Dison drew inspiration for the design from a trip she took to Guatemala, where she first encountered the serpent. The Mayans believe their ancestors came out of serpents. Dison's design depicts an ancestor emerging out of the back of the snake while it is riding a bike.

She laughed as she explained why she likes the design so much.

"I was on a really big Mayan kick for a while," she said. "Plus, the patterns are really good. I mean, they had the first language."

A 2007 graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute, Dison sees bicycles as more than a form of transportation — they are an inspiration.

Throughout college she worked on bikes.

At one point, 100 bicycles were donated to the Art Institute and divided among 20 students. Dison said she worked with other students to weld pieces of the bikes together to make tall, circus bikes.

After college, she began working in the art industry. But when money began dwindling in

her profession due to the economy, she began to look around for other options.

"I had to find another resource to make money without being in an office or standing in a museum all day long, so I started fixing bicycles," she said. "In my opinion, it goes along with my degree in the fact that it is three-dimensional. And also, it is something I am a big supporter of — which is the environment."

Dison worked at Family Bicycles in Waldo for a year before coming to work at The Hub, which is run by Bridging the Gap through a grant.

Offering free bike repairs to students, staff and faculty at UMKC, she said she stays busy during nice weather.

"This summer I had 20 people a day in the three hours," she said. "It has definitely skyrocketed as a program. But it definitely depends on the weather."

Dison said she really enjoys what she does because it is a service to the community.

"I get to keep in touch with the community and I get to help people stay out of cars," she said.

Now, patrons of The Hub will get to enjoy the convenient service in the presence of a Mayan spirit that once acted as a messenger between the Mayan people and the world of the gods.

Dison will be hosting a solo show of her sculptures Dec. 4 at Blue Djinn Gallery, 1400 Union Ave. in the West Bottoms. The exhibit is called "Recycled Stories" and was made with recycled items — including some bicycle parts.

For more information, visit www.katdison.com.
alang@unews.com