Since its opening season, the Howard Performing Arts Center has been a hub for the wealth of talent readily available not only through music, but through visual art as well. Greg Constantine, a Professor Emeritus at Andrews University and a nationally recognized contemporary artist, has made a practice of lending some of his artwork to the Howard Center to fill the expansive white walls near the steps to the balcony of the concert hall. During the less busy summer months the old pieces are taken down, and a fresh new batch of artwork is installed.

The first pieces ever installed were paintings Constantine finished in the 1970’s depicting the Statue of Liberty and the St. Louis Arch from his American Landmark series. Since then, many one-of-a-kind pieces
have brightened the hallways of the Howard Center including a few from his series on the Northern Lights dancing with deep purples and bright greens. This season, Constantine has opted to lend two of his own paintings, as well as two from past Andrews University students.

A piece entitled “Ode to Keith Haring” by Andy Iverson, who graduated with his BFA from Andrews University in 2006, looks at first as though it is a painting of colorful hills rolling further and further into the distance, but upon closer investigation, it becomes clear that those ‘rolling hills’ are really made up doodle-like shapes. The piece is so titled because its bold color and style is reminiscent of artist and social activist Keith Haring’s work.

The second student piece is by Stephen Pearson, who graduated with his BFA from Andrews University in 1973, and is entitled “Ode to Sam Francis” after the American painter famous for emphasizing the edges of his paintings. The canvas on Pearson’s piece is completely blank except for 6-inch wide bands of cream-colored paint along each outside edge. Constantine chose the piece because he is partial to the way in which the neutral edge work causes the eye to activate not only the painted space, but the empty space between as well.

Both of Constantine’s pieces deal with surfaces, and seeing things past the surface. “I was interested in creating an illusion of something existing behind the canvas,” he explains. “Opened Surface” uses the illusion of a circular opening to reveal lines and curves interacting dynamically. Constantine’s second piece, “Split Surface,” appears to have cracked open in the center exposing similar curving shapes.

Constantine says that he gravitates towards abstract art to share with the Howard Center in an effort to appeal to its broad and diverse audience. He cites from a book by Russian artist from the 20th century, Wassily Kandinsky, who insisted that music without lyrics connects souls in a way that visual art cannot - that is, cannot unless it is abstract art. Constantine explains that when art is recognizable it appeals to the intellect, not the soul. “Abstract art is capable of moving the soul,” says Constantine.

Just as symphonies and cantatas move the listener in an indescribable way, Constantine hopes that his visual contributions will extend the experience into the halls and, hopefully, hearts of the hundreds of people who visit the Howard Center each season.

Written by Emily Ferguson, Howard Center Intern
Opened Surface

"I was interested in creating an illusion of something existing behind the canvas." - Greg Constantine

Ode to Sam Francis

Pictured on the right is Stephen Pearson’s art called “Ode to Sam Francis” after the American painter famous for emphasizing the edges of his paintings. Andy Iverson’s painting “Ode to Keith Haring” is the first photo, located on the top of the page.

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Greg Constantine, Professor Emeritus, talks about the new art in the Howard Center with intern, Emily Ferguson.

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Date: September 1, 2013, 1:00 am
Contact: hpac@andrews.edu

Ticket Info:

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