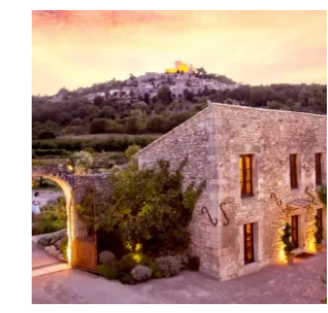




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# Fichtinger speaks to students on her experience in China

Photo by Taylor McDonald

Written by Asli Shebe

On Feb. 6, Foundations Studies Professor Gayle Fichtinger awed students with images of her sabbatical trip to Shanghai, Beijing and Xi'an, China. Students and faculty members filled the seats and back wall of the Alexander Hall Auditorium tuning into Professor Fichtinger's retelling of her travels around China after winning the 2014 Sabbatical Award. The first portion of her presentation consisted of images and video clips of her trip, and the second consisted of her own personal work including an exhibition she currently has set up at Troy University in Alabama.

During the presentation, Fichtinger shared photographs of the museums, gardens and temples she visited on her trip. She described her admiration for the craftsmanship and detail of the work she encountered: from life-size warriors to miniature landscapes. Fichtinger became excited when she got to a picture of the Terracotta Warriors, saying that her "dream come true was getting to see" the 8,000 life-size warriors located in the museum.

Professor Fichtinger and her husband embarked on their three-week journey with no translator or tour guide.

"People thought we were crazy!" Fichtinger said.

She and her husband were used to traveling around Europe as a lot of locals there speak English; she speaks Spanish and her husband speaks French. Although, she said going on the trip and experiencing everything on a ground level, rather than as a tourist, "took away all fear of traveling anywhere in the world." She did not suggest it for the faint-hearted, saying she only took that route because she wanted the trip to be educational.

After presenting the trip, Fichtinger spoke briefly about her own work in the second portion of the lecture, sharing images of the paintings and ceramics she did that were influenced by her love of nature. She admitted that her love for hiking and her childhood spent on a farm impacted a lot of her work. She shared with the audience a glimpse of her favorite spot in the woods in New Hampshire and spoke about how she views mossy stumps as miniature landscapes and incorporates the detail and texture of the stumps into her own work.

Following the presentation was a brief Q&A session, where students and faculty had the opportunity to speculate further on the adventures Fichtinger had embarked on. A group of students approached her afterward, thanking her for sharing her work and trip.

In a brief interview after the presentation, Fichtinger shared how she would attend various showcases and was always being asked if she had been to China yet. She mentioned how when she was applying for the sabbatical she thought, "What's a big wish? My big wish was that I could get to go to China."

While gushing about the many wonders of her trip Fichtinger said, "I know this is cliché, but it really was a life-changing trip."

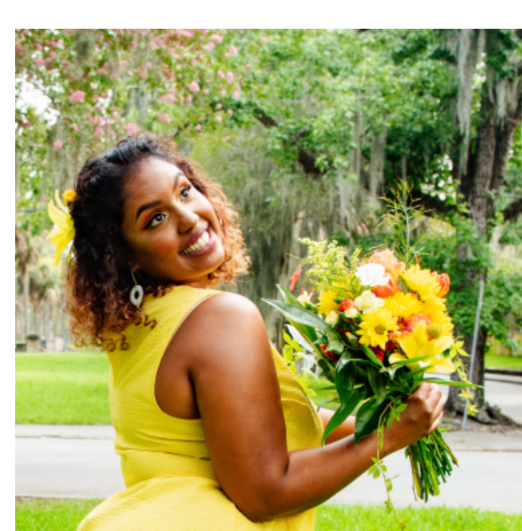
Fichtinger currently has an exhibition of her paintings and ceramics set up at the Malone Gallery at Troy University in Alabama, titled "Landscapes: Near & Far." The exhibition runs from Jan. 2 to Feb. 13 with a reception and lecture on Feb. 12.

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Asli Shebe is a senior writing major from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She began working for District in 2014 as a staff writer, then copy editor, A&E editor, Chief Assignment editor and finally, Editor-in-Chief in 2017. Asli currently holds the record for obtaining the most job titles during her time at District. When she's not writing for District you can find her biking around the Historic District of Savannah at odd hours of the day.