



Sister Cities of Jasper, Inc.

Jasper, Indiana · Pfaffenweiler, Baden-Württemberg

Artisan Exchange – November 2021

November 13 - December 1, 2021, three artists from Jasper: Jay Hamlin, Curtis Uebelhor, Monte Lee Young traveled to Pfaffenweiler, Germany, to demonstrate, produce, and sell their products at the open-air Christmas market in Pfaffenweiler.

Article by Kathy Tretter, Editor ferdnews@psci.net

An excellent adventure!

Pfaffenweiler is a village in the district of Breisgau Hochschwarzwald in Baden-Württemberg in southern Germany. Around 1850, over 200 inhabitants of Pfaffenweiler emigrated to the United States, and settled in Jasper.

By Kathy Tretter
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If someone plans to take a working vacation, Germany would definitely be a stellar place to ply one's craft (and have some time to play).

Such was the case for three Dubois County artists who were selected for an exchange program with Jasper's Sister City, Pfaffenweiler, Germany.

The idea was hatched early last year to solidify cultural and economic ties between the two communities situated on either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Applications were due in May and the original idea was to send one artist to Pfaffenweiler while Pfaffenweiler would send an artist to Jasper.

The Eckerle Family Foundation agreed to be the lead funder for the project.

After the applications were reviewed, the choices were pared down to three and all three artists were invited in for an interview.

Curt Uebelhor, a dimensional artist and painter who teaches art as his day job, corporate and commercial photographer Jay Hamlin and potter/ceramic artist Monty Young must have all aced the interviews as the committee decided to send all three for a late autumn German adventure.

The trio learned in August they would be departing on November 13, with plans to showcase their work at various German Christmas markets.

Of course, the best laid plans can sometime go awry and such was the case this time.

Soon after their arrival, COVID-19 ramped up in Germany and the decree came down from on high — all German Christmas markets (Christkindlmarks) were canceled and would be closed for the duration. However, 20 miles across the border in France the Christmas markets were open and thriving.

The artists intended to showcase and sell their wares in Freiburg — the largest nearby city — and possibly other markets, but that was not to be.

They were able to set up in a Cap Market, explains Uebelhor, a Ferdinand native and resident. The Cap Market in Pfaffenweiler got around the problem of the closures by not being called a Christmas market —

the wares were created by residents with disabilities. The Cap manager set up two booths for his American visitors but Curt says it was rainy and cold to the point the wind lifted the tarp cover, which in turn lifted up the entire structure. Still, it provided an opportunity to chat with residents and share some of his work — much of which he gave away.

Meanwhile Hamlin was busy photographing Burgermeister Dieter Hahn, the Cap manager and anyone else who intrigued him.

Young had shipped quite a bit of his work in advance while Hamlin had all his camera equipment and Uebelhor brought materials to work onsite.

Curt is primarily known for his three-dimensional works of art, which would be difficult to transport or replicate, so he focused on print making, creating four unique designs by carving them into a material that could be compared to an eraser.

Relief prints in the past would have been carved into wood and art students of a certain age will recall carving into linoleum to transfer and create a print. Uebelhor says the softer material is much more malleable and easy to work with.

One of his designs was of a snail.

Why?

“Pfaffenweiler is in the Schneck Valley and schnecke means snail,” Uebelhor explains, noting that during the horrific potato famine in the mid-1800s when people could not find food, they relied on snails for sustenance. “They ate snails out of necessity,” he adds, and snails have become a sort of icon for the region. He also created a rendering of Pfaffenweiler’s logo, featuring goblets, as well as two joined hands with Pfaffenweiler arched around one and Jasper around the other.

Curt set up a studio next to a graphics company and winery and he became friends with the graphics company owner who, he discovered, was restoring a 1953 Chevy truck in his spare time. Prior to departing Uebelhor had gathered a bit of swag from area businesses, including Uebelhor’s in Jasper (which is spelled the same as his surname even though there are five ways to spell Uebelhor), so he gifted his new friend with a t-shirt, key chain and other goodies sporting the Chevrolet logo. Later his friend showed him that he had attached a Uebelhor Chevrolet key chain to his prized Chevy pickup key

All three were lodged in Pfaffenweiler homes — Curt with a couple who gave him free reign to the top floor of their abode, which included all the amenities. Jay stayed with an elderly couple in their 80s who had no trouble keeping up with their much younger visitor.

Monty and his wife were provided lodging in a 400 year old home.

Since they couldn’t participate in a Christmas market the trio (plus one) did quite a bit of touring, including several visits to Freiburg.

One of the highlights was a soccer match, which Curt calls a “real” soccer match in a stadium filled with around 32,000 people — all wearing masks.

However, for him an even bigger thrill came with a visit to Colmar, Alsace, (now in France), to see the Isenheim Altarpiece (1506-1515), a polyptych that decorated the hospital chapel of the Isenheim monastery and was painted by Matthias Grünewald (1470–1528), considered one of the greatest German Renaissance artists. In this, his most famous work, the central panel portraying the crucified body of Christ is pitted with black sores that would have resembled those on the plague victims who visited the monastery in hope of a cure.

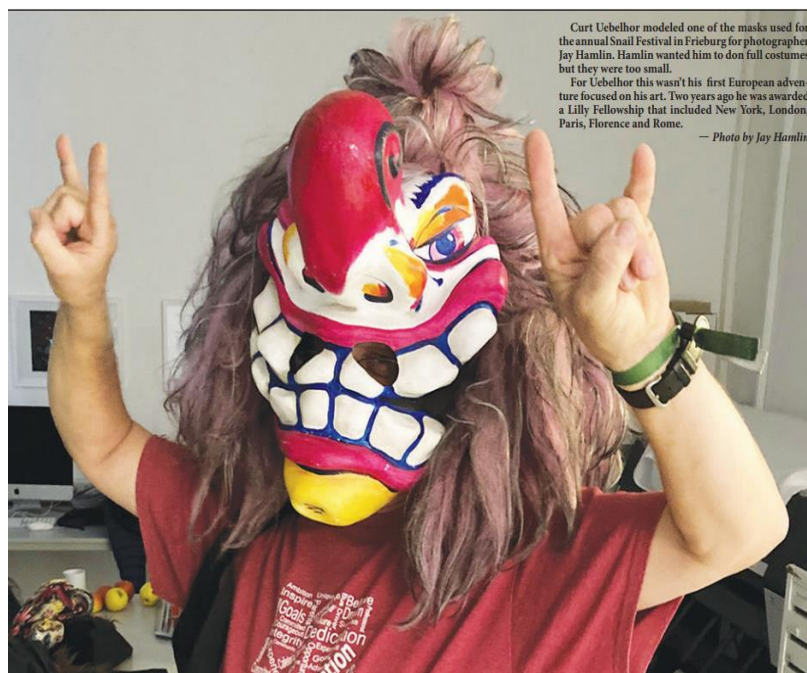
“The crucifixion is just amazing,” Uebelhor enthuses. “It is so powerful!”

Also of special interest to Curt was the work of early Renaissance painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), who would have carved his prints into wood, which is far more difficult.

Hamlin, meanwhile, was capturing everything he saw through the lens of his camera. Freiburg has a huge festival known as Schneckefest (yes, that translates to snail festival) complete with historic costumes and he wanted to capture them on film. He wanted Curt to be his model but the costumes were all too small. Luckily, they had traveled with a family whose much smaller daughter was along and served as the model.

The working holiday came to a close on December 1 when the group returned to southern Indiana after an excellent adventure — despite the Christmas market snafu.

Sadly, the artist from Germany did not make the trip to Jasper so that part of the exchange didn't happen, but Uebelhor believes this was not a one and done idea as organizers in Jasper, including Mayor Dean Vonderheide would like to give it another shot. Meanwhile, a trip to Pfaffenweiler is in the planning stages for 2022 by the Partnership Commission and everyone is invited. If interested check out the City of Jasper's facebook page.



Curt Uebelhor modeled one of the masks used for the annual Snail Festival in Freiburg for photographer Jay Hamlin. Hamlin wanted him to don full costumes but they were too small. For Uebelhor this wasn't his first European adventure focused on his art. Two years ago he was awarded a Lilly Fellowship that included New York, London, Paris, Florence and Rome. Photo by Jay Hamlin



Curt Uebelhor on a hike near Gutach



Enjoying a fondue feast with friends.



A vineyard overlooking Pfaffenweiler. A scenic view of Freiburg.

Photos by Curt Uebelhor and Jay Hamlin

This information is from the February 2022 Jasper DeutscherVerein newsletter