

LOCAL POET OF POTTERY *continued*

An oasis of artistic infusion, LibertyTown is Fredericksburg's hub for all things creative. The largest art center is filled with dozens of studios and fosters artistic growth through community classes. An eclectic group of artists—from painters and potters to photographers and weavers—work or teach in LibertyTown, affording visitors an up-close look at the practice and power of art. As the studio's first artist-in-residence, Neal has been with Liberty Town since it opened in 2002. Much of his success, he says, is due in part to his supportive environment.

"Liberty Town has helped me tremendously as far as exposure to a wider audience goes, and it has also been an excellent place to work. It is helpful to have others doing similar things around me; it's very much a tight-knit community," said Neal.

For the past several years, Neal has served as one of many teachers in Liberty Town, where he encourages students to realize their creative visions through arts and crafts. In this position, he has learned to appreciate new aspects of pottery, as well as better understand the methodology behind the construction process. One of the best parts of his job, Neal says, is teaching people the ins and outs of working with clay.

For Ruth Golden, a local potter, Neal's classes offer new insights into the design and construction process of pottery. The long-time Fredericksburg resident has been attending the popular classes for six years.

"I thoroughly enjoy the vision he brings to everyday forms like boxes, vases and tiles," said Ruth, who also took one of Neal's hand-building pottery classes. "He is a gentle, patient guide who has helped me gain confidence and renewed my artistic spirit."

Neal's own works of art, heralded for their alluring nature themes, has helped position him as one of the region's most popular potters. What sets his work apart from others is its exquisite structural balance and attention to detail—the scales of a fish on a bowl, for example, seem almost lifelike in repose. Influenced by ancient pottery and artistic styles, Neal classifies his own style as "ancient, with a modern bent."

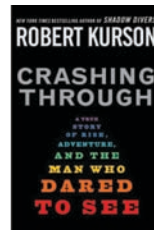
"The most challenging part of pottery at this point is finding the time do it now that I have Baxter, my two-year-old son. Along with that, it's tough trying to figure out ways to make things faster," said Neal. "The most rewarding part of being a potter is actually making the piece. It truly is all about the process. Working in clay is almost mesmerizing in that I get lost in it."

—Nicholas Addison Thomas

If you'd like to get lost in Neal's work, you can view select pieces at www.libertytownarts.com/artists/nealreed/neal.htm. To learn more about LibertyTown, visit www.libertytownarts.com.

WRITER'S BLOCK

AN EYE-OPENING TRUE STORY

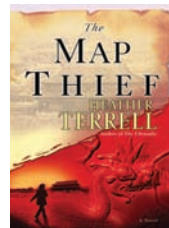


Robert Kurson, "Crashing Through"

Few works of non-fiction drive home the importance of living life to the fullest better than "Crashing Through," a moving story about a

blind entrepreneur and adventurer who obliterated stereotypes to find success. After a freak accident stole Mike May's vision at age three, he taught himself how to dress, drive and always get up after a fall. In this inspiring book, the author challenges readers to put themselves in May's shoes and proves there's more to living than meets the eye.

A THRILLING HISTORY LESSON



Heather Terrell, "The Map Thief"

World history as we know it may be marred by factual error. At least that's what the author of "The Map Thief"

would have us believe. In this rip-roaring read, real history is fused with mystery, leaving readers to question the truth behind the Age of Discovery. In a highly detailed fashion, Terrell paints a vivid picture of maritime mania before the days of Columbus, creating an exciting and informative book that will have readers scratching their heads in glee.

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF WAR



David Bergen, "The Time in Between"

The far-reaching effects of war and the pursuit of self-acceptance serve as the framework for David Bergen's

spellbinding fourth book. Toggling

between a war veteran's journey to shed his sins and a family's heavy dilemma, "The Time in Between" is philosophical fiction at its best, enticing readers to consider those tangible moments between life and death. Few authors are able to produce the type of fiction that encourages readers to question their own reason(s) for existence, but Bergen does it with ease and elegance.

SURVIVING TEENAGE YEARS INTACT

David Mitchell, "Black Swan Green"

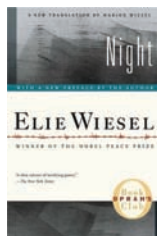


It should be known that anyone who survives adolescence should be crowned a victor. No one is more deserving of that title than Jason Taylor, the gawky protagonist of this

coming-of-age novel from two-time Booker Prize finalist David Mitchell. Altogether touching and semi-autobiographical, "Black Swan Green" manages to accomplish what so many books haven't: capture the innocence and brittleness of youth through the eyes of a misunderstood teenager.

A SOBERING LOOK AT SOCIETY

Elie Wiesel, "Night"



A 1986 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, "Night" could arguably be the most emphatic portrayal of the Holocaust in publication. This autobiographical

depiction of a young boy's life in concentration camps brings to the surface the little-known details of the Holocaust and forces the reader to consider the possibility that man could ultimately cause the end of mankind. All and all, "Night" is a book heralded for its ability to take a controversial subject and transform it into a truthful portrait of tainted humanity.

—Nicholas Addison Thomas



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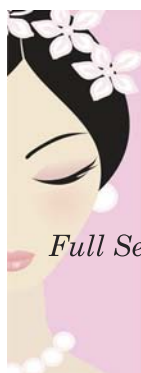
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