

## Artistic chops, with the hands and feet (and medal) to prove it

**Tanner Smith's sculpture for his high school art class wasn't quite right. Then he had an idea. Now he'll be accepting an award at New York's Carnegie Hall.**

By Patrick Cliff / *The Bulletin*

Published: May 12, 2009 4:00AM PST

Tanner Smith has made it to Carnegie Hall. But the young jazz musician won't be sitting behind a drum set at the famed music hall, he'll be there to accept an award for his sculpture.

"Hand in Foot," 16-year-old Tanner's prize-winning sculpture, is more than a foot tall, with an open hand rising out of a foot.

On June 4 at Carnegie Hall, Tanner will receive a National American Visions Medal for his ceramic sculpture, which he made in art class at Sisters High School. Tanner's quick success in art has even inspired him to consider studying art in college. For now, he's excited about his first trip to New York City.

Carnegie Hall is Tanner's final step in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, which for him began in January at the Central Oregon Scholastic Awards. His sculpture was one of five works chosen from among hundreds at the regional contest. The sculpture was forwarded to the national contest.

Nationally, Tanner faced even tougher odds. There are 81 contests across the country, and about 140,000 works of art — including writing, painting and sculpture, among others — were entered. The contest includes students from seventh through 12th grade.

Tanner's medal means the national judges thought his was the best of all works from the region, said Scott Lerner, the coordinator of national programs at Scholastic, the publishing company behind the awards.

A serious jazz drummer, Tanner has dabbled in art his whole life, but never focused on it, he said. Tanner took an art class this year, and Mike Baynes was his teacher.

"Mr. Baynes just took me under his arm and showed me great stuff," Tanner said. "I'm really motivated about it now."

After an early drawing project this year, Baynes thought Tanner was a talented artist. The sculpture, Baynes said, confirmed the impression.

Success didn't come immediately for Tanner.

The vision came to Tanner during about three weeks of work. One day, the Sisters High School sophomore said he thought for a



Melissa Jansson / The Bulletin

Tanner Smith says he's not sure whether he'll study art, music or both in college, but with his recent national award for his sculpture, art is making a strong case, he said. "I'm really motivated about it now."

new design.

"About halfway through, I thought, 'Hey, what if I attach a foot to this thing?'" Tanner said. "None of it was planned, (not) what it was going to look like at the end."

Tanner's original concept was of a hand atop a Roman column, and it wasn't working. It just didn't feel right, Baynes said. So Tanner asked his teacher if he could start over rather than settle for a mediocre sculpture.

At first, Tanner struggled with the sculpture, but his work was increasingly refined as he attempted the second version, Baynes said.

Baynes said that constant improvement might have come from Tanner's jazz.

"Tanner being a musician, he's learned discipline, and he's not afraid to practice and work," Baynes said.

Tanner's sculpture is ambitious, Baynes said, and Tanner carried it off as an advanced artist might. Not only were the details refined, but it was a unique work, Baynes said.



Photo courtesy Mike Baynes

Sisters High School sophomore Tanner Smith, 16, won a National American Visions Medal for his sculpture "Hand in Foot."

"I was really, really surprised by the technical aspect of it," Baynes said. "I really was struck by the quality of the piece, the proportion, the whole concept of the foot unfolding and the hand coming out."

The award surprised Tanner, who had no intention of entering the sculpture in any contests. But Baynes insisted on entering it in the contest.

"I didn't think it was going into any contest," Tanner said. "I did it for a grade."

The award is exciting, but the trip to New York is a thrill, Tanner and Baynes said.

Carnegie Hall has hosted some of the greatest musicians in American history. Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane all played the hall. Likewise, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards have noticed some of America's most famed artists and writers over the years, including Andy Warhol, Truman Capote and Richard Avedon.

During a gala celebration at the hall, Tanner and other medal winners will walk across the hall's stage to accept their awards.

Baynes, who will also make the trip to New York, said neither the importance of the award nor of the trip has hit them.

"For anybody, the thought of going to Carnegie Hall, to actually partake in something there, has got to be huge," Baynes said. "No matter what he does in his life, he'll remember this. I'll remember this."

Though he didn't expect to win, Tanner was excited and eager to make his first trip to New York.

"Hey, that's awesome. I'm going to New York," Tanner said.

Tanner's New York itinerary should be crowded. He wants to visit art and music schools, stop by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and check out a few jazz clubs.

For now, he's not sure if he'll study art, music or both in college. Art, he said, is making a charge.

Tanner's mother, Brenda Smith, said the family was proud of his medal win, but the art itself made them prouder still.

"We're especially proud because we believe in the art," Smith said. "We believe in the idea that art, that art and creativity is what makes life worth living."

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