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Home is Where the Art Is

By Michael J. Solender

Posted: Wednesday, Mar. 19, 2014

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When Felicia van Bork and Alan Michael Parker first visited Davidson 14 years ago for Parker's faculty interview at Davidson College, van Bork found herself conflicted about the experience.

"We recently purchased a home in Pennsylvania and were settling in for a period of what I hoped would be some stability," recalled van Bork. "Alan said, 'Don't worry; it is very unlikely I'll get an offer.' The next thing I knew we were moving to North Carolina."

Fast forward to 2014 and the couple, married 28 years, couldn't be happier with their decision. Each has well established careers and is harvesting success that comes from pursuing their creative passion.

Parker, 53, instrumental in helping burnish the reputation of the creative writing program at Davidson College, is the Douglas C. Houchens Professor of English. A nationally recognized writer and poet, he has received considerable accolades including three Pushcart Prizes, the Finline Prize from the Mid-American Review, the 2013 Randall Jarrell Award, the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, and the 2012 North Carolina Book Award for Long Division.

van Bork, 52, positively shines as a visual artist whose mediums extend to printmaking, collage and painting. Her work is influenced by both surrealism and abstract expressionism. She held residency fellowships at Byrdcliffe, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and Charlotte's McColl Center for Visual Art, where she was an Affiliate Artist. Her work has been featured in some of the nation's most prestigious art shows including Art Miami, Art Wynwood and the Dallas Art Fair. She is represented locally by the Jerald Melberg Gallery.

The couple's creative lives intersect in both predictable and surprising ways.



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"We talk about art, art making, teaching techniques (she's an adjunct faculty member at Central Piedmont Community College teaching drawing) and our work every day," said van Bork, Parker nodding and smiling in agreement. "Our partnership is significant in that we liberally borrow from each other, encourage each other and allow each other the freedom to work as much as we can."

Parker notes that the couple has a creative understanding and appreciation. "I'm moved by visual art and there is a great connection with how I express myself. Writing is how I learn who I am and how I think," said Parker. "My medium is language; Felicia expresses herself similarly through her work."

The couple borrows liberally from each other's vernacular. van Bork speaks of "building a narrative" in her collages and Parker talks about "knocking words together" as a way to start a poem. Mutual respect and appreciation is evident, as is the joy they have in sharing their creative outlets and opportunities.

Parker's upcoming novel, "The Committee on Town Happiness," published by Dzanc Books will be released in June. van Bork recently exhibited at Melberg's 30th anniversary show and is looking forward to upcoming showings and a possible residency in the summer.

Together they are a high wattage duo that helps make Davidson a magnet for creative talent.

More information:

Alan Michael Parker: <http://www.amparker.com/>

Felicia van Bork: <http://www.feliciavanbork.com/>

Jerald Melberg Gallery: <http://www.jeraldmelberg.com/Artists/Gallery-Artists/Gallery-Artists-Felicia-van-Bork>

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