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Kansas City artists Dylan Mortimer, Jaimie Warren and Andrzej Zielinski net 2009 Charlotte Street Foundation awards

By ALICE THORSON

Could life be better?

In the space of four days Kansas City artist Dylan Mortimer learned he'd won a \$10,000 visual artist award from the Charlotte Street Foundation and welcomed his first son, Noah, into the world.

Mortimer, who is known for thought-provoking artworks that place private faith in the public sphere, is one of three artists to receive \$10,000 Charlotte Street awards for artistic merit.

The two others are performance artist and photographer Jaimie Warren and painter Andrzej Zielinski.

All in their late 20s and early 30s, the three may be the most high-profile group of award winners since the program began in 1997, although they represent a cutting back from the four artist slate of winners in recent years.

"For a decade we've been talking about the necessity of exporting the work of Kansas City artists," said Bruce Hartman, director of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art at Johnson County Community College and a member of the panel that chose the winners.

"Here are three artists who base their studio practice in Kansas City but are actively exhibiting nationally and even internationally. It can be done."

Zielinski, who has shown his paintings of laptops, ATMs, cell phones and other machines at the Marc Selwyn Gallery in Los Angeles, recently landed a mention in *Time Out New York* for his inclusion in a group show at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery in New York.

An exhibit of his new paintings of paper shredders is currently on view at the Dolphin gallery in Kansas City.

Jaimie Warren has shown her theatrical color photographs of herself and her friends in more than two dozen exhibits in Kansas City, New York and internationally. In 2008 the Aperture Foundation published a book of her self-portraits; in June Kemper at the Crossroads will present a five-year overview of Warren's photographs.

Warren recently presented an installment of Whoop Dee Doo, her series of community variety show productions of wildly diverse acts, at Deitch Projects in



"Violet Paper Shredder" (2008), by 2009 award winner Andrzej Zielinski, is currently on view in Zielinski's one-person show at Dolphin gallery.



Two photographs by award winner Jaimie Warren recently were featured on outdoor billboards at the Missouri Bank's new Crossroads branch.

New York.

She plans to use some of her award money to scout out new venues.

Mortimer, who is pastor of the Rivercity Community Church in Westport, generated a firestorm of publicity and response when he installed a pair of his "Public Prayer Booths" in midtown Manhattan in New York last fall; he also has an impressive list of national exhibitions to his credit.

The award is "perfect timing" with the new baby, Mortimer said. "There will definitely be plenty of needs for it."

A rotating panel of five awards advisers selected Mortimer, Warren and Zielinski from a pool of 34 artists nominated by the panelists and community advisers.

Joining Hartman on this year's panel of awards advisers were Russell Ferguson, chair of the UCLA department of art and former deputy director and chief curator of the Hammer Museum in L.A.; James Martin, a Kansas City-based independent curator and art writer; Valerie Cassel Oliver, curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art Houston; and Stacy Switzer, artistic director of Grand Arts in Kansas City.

"I'm very excited for all of them," Switzer said. "I think it's a great group. I think Jaimie's really come out into her own this year. She's pushing herself to new levels, and she couldn't be more deserving."

Warren said she cried a little bit when she learned she'd received an award.

"It's kind of scary to have that much money," she said. "I'm very used to a paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle. You worry about losing your sense of the value of the dollar."

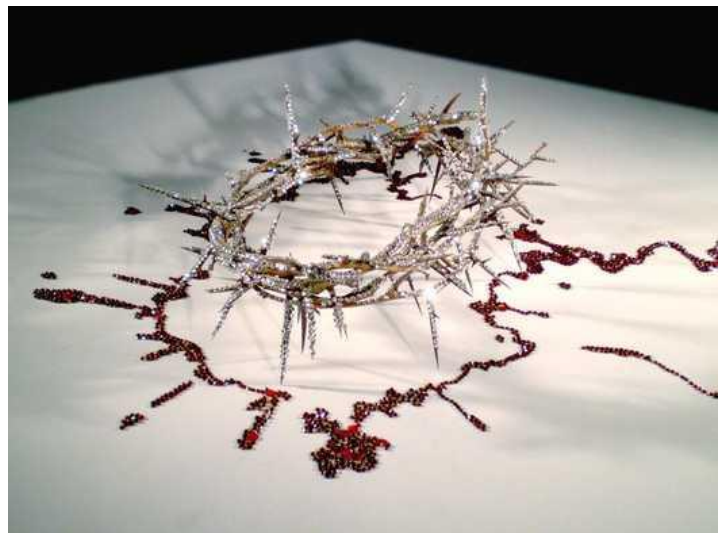
When Zielinski got the call, he had no time to process the news.

"It's still sinking in," he said in a recent phone interview. "I teach night classes at Johnson County Community College, and they called me with two minutes to go before I had to start teaching."

Zielinski said he will use the award money to buy art supplies and to launch a new series of prints with Mike Sims at Lawrence Lithography Workshop. He will use some of the funds to travel and i

Charlotte Street Foundation director David Hughes attributes the change from four to three winners this year to the tougher fundraising climate of the economic downturn.

The 2009 awards bring the total number of Kansas City artists to receive awards to 71 and the total amount of grants disbursed to \$422,500. The figures include three performing arts awards winners and will grow later this year when the foundation announces its second round of performing arts grants, which were launched in 2008.



Dylan Mortimer, an artist who is also a local minister, is one of three 2009 Charlotte Street Foundation visual arts award winners. "The Most Ballin' Crown of Thorns EVER!!!" (2008) is one of his contemporary interpretations of religious themes.