The Joy of Painting for Your Community: SEM Welcomes Ms. Butski

BY ELLE NOECKER
Staff Reporter

Last year, Buffalo Seminary said farewell to its highly respected school art teacher of eight years, Ms. Caitlin Cass. Although we wish Ms. Cass the best of luck on her artistic journey as an Assistant Studio Art Professor at the University of Nebraska at Oklahoma, SEM knew that there were some big shoes to fill in the art department.

And the school found just the perfect person for the job.

This year, our school enthusiastically welcomed Ms. Tricia Butski to the SEM community. Growing up in Niagara Falls, Ms. Butski has lived in the Buffalo area her whole life. Her teaching experience is nothing short of expertise. In the past, she was a college professor at University at Buffalo, Niagara Community College, Erie Community College, and SUNY Fredonia. Her first artistic inspiration came from her childhood when she would watch Bob Ross on his show, “The Joy of Painting.” Art became a passion for Ms. Butski in high school when she realized that she wanted to pursue a career in her creative interests in some way. Her top interests were artistic therapy and teaching.

At SEM, the classes she teaches include: Intro to Drawing, Basic Painting, Mixed Media, Foundations and Abstractions, and the freshman ArtsEye Class alongside Ms. Drozd, chair of the fine arts department and theatre teacher. In the words of Ms. Butski, “ArtsEye is awesome, I’ve never had the opportunity to teach a class like that before, so that’s totally new to me.”

When she’s not in the art gallery, Ms. Butski loves to collect plants, crochet, hike and spend time outside. When she creates art outside of school, she enjoys using charcoal and graphite in her work. One of the many things she loves about art is how it contributes to connecting with the greater community. In fact, Ms. Butski actively paints murals throughout the city of Buffalo as a way to share what she loves with others. “The most important way that I connect with the community is through public art,” she said. “Public art is an artist’s gift to their community, [a] way of telling the community that you care about them and that they’re important. [Public] art is for everybody,” she exclaimed passionately. She also created several wall murals for the Albright Knox Art Gallery.

Ms. Butski feels that her mission is to help students to find their inner creativity and understand that “everybody is an artist.” She helps students to build confidence and find individuality in their work. “I want to show students that through time and practice anyone can be good at art and art is a way to express yourself,” she said. In the words of Fiona M. ’24, a student in Ms. Butski’s Intro to Drawing class, “Ms. Butski is a great teacher and she helps everyone improve upon the skills they already have.”

As a former student who attended a small private high school, which had a dynamic similar to that of SEM, Ms. Butski felt a sense of familiarity in Buffalo Seminary. “I am just so excited to be here. One of the most wonderful things about SEM is that it feels like home, and that’s what I was looking for.” •
Getting to Know Mrs. Scott

By Faith Wendel
Photography Director

“I really want to build relationships with students, faculty, and staff at SEM,” says Mrs. Jackie Scott, the new librarian of the school library, when asked about her goals. Mrs. Scott started working at Buffalo Seminary in the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. She also works at SUNY Erie College on the days when she is not at SEM. She realizes that librarians are sometimes known for being serious and strict, but she welcomes students to ask questions. “It is our whole purpose for being here!”

Mrs. Scott explains that “helping people” is of great importance to her, and she tends to choose jobs that allow her to do so. Coming out of college, she helped people find jobs. After that, she had numerous jobs all revolving around helping others. For example, she helped people learn to make jewelry, and she was a veterinary technician. However, she reveals that she is “happiest” as a librarian.

Since she has such a profound love for books, she shows interest in all genres. However, after years of reading, her longest standing favorite is “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. She found a liking for the genre of magical realism but doesn’t think she has a favorite. Mrs. Scott said, “I’ll read anything.” She shared that she’s always open to book recommendations and suggestions for what students would like to see in the library. Not only does she read books, but she also writes original short stories for fun, and wrote three novel length works of fanfiction. I think she gave a valuable life lesson when she disclosed that she won’t finish a book if it doesn’t spark her interest in the first fifty or so pages.

Mrs. Scott’s top priority at Buffalo Seminary is to make the library feel welcoming and inviting to students and staff. She describes the library as “the heart of the school.” She has successfully revived the Little Free Library where students can pick out a book (some are read in classes and others are simply for fun) to keep. Her plans are to have students help her decide what books to get, help make displays, and help plan events in the library. Student input has already started to be collected through a survey, and she still would like to see more responses because she believes the library is for everyone.

She encourages students to help out in the library, participate in upcoming events, or just stop in and say hello! Book a trip to the library! (Haha...get it?....book...)

Interested in writing, design, or photography?
Email Ms. Harb to get involved in journalism club!
jharb@buffaloseminary.org
The Better Brew: Caffe Aroma vs. Starbucks

BY KATHERINE F. ROONEY
Features Editor

Every day at 3:30 p.m., right after the bell rings, many students at Buffalo Seminary stream out of their classrooms to get a cup of coffee. The most popular place to do so right now is Starbucks. However, is that necessarily the best place? Perhaps we have been overlooking the quaint, local Caffe Aroma which is located just steps away from our go-to Starbucks’ Elmwood Avenue location.

Of course, there are many things to consider when deciding upon the perfect location for your after school pick-me-up. To test out the two most convenient options (due to their proximity to SEM’s campus), I decided to go to both businesses after school along with Mary Goetz, a sophomore at Buffalo Seminary, and Abby Paolini, a sophomore at City Honors, to get multiple perspectives. The consensus was less clear than originally anticipated and neither establishment was an obvious winner.

To start things off, Mary ordered a black coffee at both Starbucks and Caffe Aroma in order to compare the two. The winner in this category was Caffe Aroma by a long shot. She described her Starbucks coffee as “burnt and gross,” while the coffee from Caffe Aroma was slightly less strong and much smoother. Of course, coffee is a highly subjective drink, but in terms of the better brew, Caffe Aroma reigns supreme.

To further analyze the beverages, both Abby and I ordered specialty drinks. I ordered a caramel macchiato at the two spots and Abby ordered a small pumpkin cream cold brew at Starbucks and a pumpkin spice decaf at Caffe Aroma. Starbucks definitely had better specialty drinks than Caffe Aroma, however they were very, very sweet. Caffe Aroma’s drinks much more closely resembled coffee than the sugar-filled Starbucks refreshments. That being said, coming from the perspective of two coffee lovers, Starbucks’ drinks were much more consistent with what we ordered and overall better tasting.

Aside from drinks, it is essential to get a pastry or another snack after a long day of classes. I decided to go with a chocolate croissant to taste test at both establishments. As much as I wanted to like Caffe Aroma’s better, after all it had a decadent chocolate drizzling and golden-brown flakes, it only took a few bites to realize that Starbucks had taken another victory. While sadder and flatter, the pain au chocolat at Starbucks had one important difference - it was filled with real chocolate. The Caffe Aroma croissant was instead filled with some oozy, orangy-tasting chocolate filling which overpowered the entire dish. It was almost impossible to finish due to its richness and thick texture. After all of this I began to wonder which was the better cafe after all?

Despite mixed reviews about various pastries and beverages, there was one thing that we could all agree on. The ambiance at Caffe Aroma far surpasses that at Starbucks. Although Starbucks was fully decked out for Christmas when we went, the synthetic tree and plastic tinsel could not mask its cold, corporate atmosphere. Caffe Aroma, on the other hand, was cozy and a much nicer place to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation. It was warmly lit by fairy lights and the wall was covered with paintings of various frogs and nature scenes that served as reminders that it is a local business that supports local artists. That brings us to the question of what is the better business to support.

Of course, I would be lying if I said that the ease of online ordering and the consistency of the quality of the items on the Starbucks menu haven’t made it a reliable go-to spot for after school. However, I think that Caffe Aroma is worth considering if you are ever looking for a more mellow atmosphere to enjoy your drink of choice. Especially as Starbucks tries to stop the Elmwood location’s unionizing attempts and more and more local businesses are closing, perhaps there is more value in who we buy our coffee from than we know.
Why you - Yes, you - Should Join the Cross Country Team

BY FIONA MURPHY
Staff Reporter

Thank you, dear reader, for deciding it was worth your precious time to hear what on earth I can say to make running appealing. Okay, I know what you are thinking, “why would I join the team?” “I don’t like running!” “I can’t run.” “It’s painful!” I thought that too, but that was before I joined the team. I learned that it’s not all about running — we do actually have fun — and it doesn’t hurt that much (most of the time). You don’t have to like running, you don’t have to be “good,” you don’t even have to have ever run before, you just need an open mind and a pair of running shoes.

I could list all of the reasons why we are the best team — our team spirit, drive, enthusiasm, etc. — but I won’t bore you with that, even though we are pretty great. What I will say, is that if you decide to join us, you won’t regret it. I’m not going to lie and say that it’s easy, because it most certainly is not, but I can assure you that it is worth it. The euphoria that you feel after running a race makes all of the mud and cold and puddles — there are a lot of puddles — worth it.

Mind you, this team is not for the faint of heart. We aren’t afraid of the weather; we run when it’s snowing, raining, hailing, over 90°, and anything else our wonderful Buffalo weather brings. Yes, it’s cold (or hot — hot’s a problem too), but we’re all in it together. We don’t stop, there’s no half-time or time-outs, you go from the starting box, through the woods, up and down the hills, through the mud, and across the finish line. It doesn’t matter if you run the whole race or walk fifty times, so long as you keep going, you’ll finish strong.

I want to assure you that even though it’s sometimes hard, the team isn’t all work and no fun, we have easy practices, we play games, we don’t just run 24/7. And we enjoy ourselves — unless it’s hill repeats, hill repeats are hard to enjoy. We have an incredible coach, Coach Mary Beth Scott, who always makes sure we have a good time and sends out the absolute best newsletters. She is always there to encourage us, find something positive to say, or brighten our day in some way or another.

Now, I know that other teams say they have team spirit, but do they get awards for getting theuddiest? I don’t think so. And, do they get crowns for PRs (personal records)? Not to brag, but we get some pretty cool merch — does anyone else have blankets or totes from their sport? I don’t actually know, but I doubt it. This is not to take away from the other teams — they are incredible, and we love them very, very much — but really Cross Country is the best. And, when you join, you get to make Starbucks runs after practice or as a cool down — and seriously, who doesn’t like to get a nice refreshing drink after a hard workout?

We work hard, yes, but it pays off, winning dual meets and getting ribbons and medals is just the reward for working hard and running harder. And, after most races, we get to have our own little celebration in our lovely shelter, our team tent, or the trunks of our cars. Every race brings the team closer, everytime your teammates are cheering from the sidelines, it makes you run just a little faster, and every PR is an opportunity for us all to see the hard work you put in.

We don’t just run, we do so much more than that. We work together, one runner’s achievement is a win for all of us. We have fun together, when we get lost on a run — which happens way more than you’d think — or have arguments about the most ridiculous topics. This is a team where you will make friends without even trying to. Everyone on the team is incredible, just like all of our new members will be.

So, sign up for Cross Country and see what happens. Take a chance, try running, see what it’s like. You might surprise yourself. And, who knows, it may become your new favorite sport.
Free Britney: An Explanation of the Movement

BY MARY E. GOETZ
News Editor

“I feel ganged up on, and I feel bullied, and I feel left out and alone. And I’m tired of feeling alone. I deserve the same rights as anybody does by having a child, a family, any of those things,” Britney Spears said in a June 2021 testimony regarding her conservatorship.

Britney Spears is a name the world has known since 1998. Back then, she was famous for her pop songs, dance choreography, and fashion style. Recently, she is associated with her overdue escape from a shackled life of conservatorship.

Erin Lee Carr has been a fan of Ms. Spears since her childhood, and journalist Jenny Eliscu had developed a personal connection with the singer while writing for Rolling Stone. In 2021, they banded together and released Britney vs. Spears, an exposing documentary on the injustices of Ms. Spears’ life. They interviewed friends, past and current employees, and family members. The result: public outrage on the treatment of such a talent as Britney Spears.

Incidents leading up to the conservatorship included:

2004: Ms. Spears married her backup dancer Kevin Federline. They had two children together. By 2007, they underwent a brutal divorce due to complications with their prenup.

2007: Ms. Spears experienced a breakdown. She shaved her head and attacked a paparazzi car with an umbrella.

2008: Ms. Spears had a second breakdown. Police were called to her residence where she locked herself and her child in the bathroom. She refused to give her kids to Mr. Federline’s bodyguard who was sent to collect them in sight of the custody battle. Ms. Spears was checked into a hospital with a second psychiatric stay.

On February 1, 2008, Ms. Spears’ father, Jamie Spears, petitioned for a temporary conservatorship over Ms. Spears. Britney’s conservatorship consisted of two parts: personal and estate.

Personal conservatorship instates a person with complete control over the conservatee’s decisions regarding healthcare, who they can or cannot see, and their abilities to communicate on the phone or computer.

Jamie Spears held this position Control over the estate gives control over all of the conservatee’s money. This position was shared between Mr. Spears and Andrew Wallet due to Mr. Spears’ history of financial mismanagement. Tony Chicotel, a conservatorship attorney contacted by the filmmakers, explains a conservatorship should be “only a last resort” (Credit: Britney vs. Spears).

Mr. James Spears was elected as conservator, rather than Ms. Spears’ mother Lynn, due to his “intimidating” stature. During interviews for the documentary, whenever the filmmakers asked about James, the interviewee would shut down entirely. One such case is during an interview with Felicia Culotta, Ms. Spears’ former assistant from 1998 to 2007 and again from 2009 to 2018, when asked about Mr. Spears said “okay, I don’t want to talk about her daddy. I don’t wanna talk about Jamie.”

Mr. Spears also had a drinking problem, which Britney brought up during her relationship with Jason Trawick. Simply put, she thought if she had to be drug tested, so should he. And if her tests came back negative, and she faced a penalty, the same should be for him.

From an anonymous source, the filmmakers received a confidential medical report for the court in March 2008. The report stated: Ms. Spears lacked the capacity “to retain and direct counsel” and “to understand or manage her own financial affairs without being subject to undue influence.” Mr. Chicotel says that in all of the conservatorship cases he had worked on, the conservatees almost never had jobs. However, during her conservatorship, Ms. Spears was working on the set of How I Met Your Mother. This trend would continue: she released two CDs, filmed a documentary, completed the Circus tour, judged X-Factor, and held a Vegas performance residency all while under the conservatorship.

Mr. Chicotel also explains that in regular cases, a proposed conservatee is given
"Britney has been silenced to speak about anything that’s really going on."

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five-day notice as time to contest the conservatorship. Ms. Spears was not given this opportunity. Ms. Eliscu explains it was because her manager Sam Lutfi was “dangerous and needs to be kept away.” People on Ms. Spears’ team, like Lorilee Craker, believe that Mr. Lutfi was drugging Ms. Spears. However, in an interview with the filmmakers, Mr. Lutfi defends himself by explaining the presence of a number of blood and drug tests coming back negative during their times together. He also points out that with accusations as such, “you call the police, you call the FBI, you don’t call TMZ.” When asked why, then, he was accused of endangering Ms. Spears, he says “I was the perfect scapegoat.” Britney’s team had to get the five-day notice waived because if she had been given it, “she would have obviously contested it immediately.”

In September of 2008, Ms. Spears negotiated a 50/50 split of custody of her kids with Mr. Federline.

Adnan Ghalib was a paparazzo that Ms. Spears had befriended in 2007. Mr. Ghalib remembers when he was out with Ms. Spears and received a call from Mr. Spears demanding they return home. When they did, Mr. Spears, security officers, and police were waiting for them at Ms. Spears’ gate. Mr. Ghalib remembers turning to her and saying “without his [James Spears’] permission, because he is you, I have kidnapped you.” After that, Ms. Spears’ contact with Mr. Ghalib dwindled until there was none.

Ms. Eliscu, while writing for Rolling Stone, recalls having to submit interview questions to Britney’s management before interviewing Britney. This was unusual, as Ms. Eliscu had interviewed her years prior with no such obstacle.

In 2008, Ms. Spears worked with MTV to create a documentary titled For the Record. Andrew Gallery, a cinematographer for the documentary, had grown close with Ms. Spears over the time shooting. To the filmmakers, he retells a time when Ms. Spears was driven to a stretch of road outside of Los Angeles to drive in her car for 30 minutes. He remembers feeling glad that she could “feel free for a minute,” but recalls the oddity of needing to arrange a 30 minute drive in her own car.

Andrew Gallery, the cinematographer from For the Record, recalls a letter Britney had written in response to a People Magazine article about “Life with Britney” from Mr. Federline’s perspective. In the letter, Britney defended herself. She said that her lawyers forced her to divorce Mr. Federline, her past partying discussed in the article was irrelevant to the situation, the things she had done for her family, and Mr. Federline drug problems. She said: “Now this year, Britney has been silenced to speak about anything that’s really going on.” Mr. Gallery received the letter with instructions to read it on live television. Instead, he told Ms. Spears to take some time to cool off. Ms. Spears’ lawyers called Ms. Gallery explained how bad it would be if the letter were to be released, so he took a picture of it and gave it to them. Shortly after the incident, Mr. Gallery stopped working for Ms. Spears.

In January 2009, Ms. Eliscu had been working on a story covering Britney Spears in LA and contacted Sam Lutfi. He explained a plan that he had formed with Mr. Ghalib to try to get Ms. Spears a different lawyer. After some convincing, Ms. Eliscu agreed and met with Britney in the bathroom stall of the Montage Hotel in Los Angeles. Ms. Eliscu brought legal documents stating “Britney Jean Spears has expressed her lack of confidence in her court-appointed attorney Samuel Ingham III” among other reasons as to why she sought a new lawyer. When they met in the bathroom stall, Ms. Eliscu handed Ms Spears the pen, she signed, and simply replied with a “thank you.” After weeks of no news, the court had ruled that Ms. Spears lacked the capacity to choose a lawyer, and doubt was cast on the signature.
Ms. Angell’s Influence on SEM

BY INGA WOOTEN-FORMAN
Staff Reporter

Many of us have seen the grand portrait of Lisbeth Gertrude Angell that sits on the fireplace’s mantel in the library. However, few actually know about her lasting impact on Buffalo Seminary. Of SEM’s many notable principals, Ms. Angell may be the most admired and influential of the position. She dedicated half a century of her life to the refinement of young women and the continuation of SEM’s message, and was a leader in establishing SEM as one of Buffalo’s most prominent schools.

After the economic crash of 1893, Ms. Angell’s father’s fortune was lost. Without this money, her future was no longer secure so she was forced to work after graduating from college. She had been teaching math and Latin at a local public school before being recruited by the previous headmistress of SEM, Jessica Beers, to teach math and English. Numerous issues with the incorporating of SEM with other private schools in the area occurred during Beers’ time heading the school, causing her untimely resignation. In 1903, just a few years after beginning work at SEM, Ms. Angell was asked to become the new principal. During her leadership, enrollment tripled and Ms. Angell relocated the school to the current building. While at the old, temporary location, the school was described by inspectors as being a leading school academically, but lacking good housing. This prompted a large donation of land on Bidwell Parkway and the construction of the new school started in 1909.

Ms. Angell, who was known to have been an athlete during her time at Wellesley College, also began one of the most notable SEM traditions in 1916: the Hornet and Jacket teams. Ms. Angell was described as a determined, resourceful woman who stood true to her many rules, treating both students and faculty with respectful determination.

“I just want my life back.”

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John Anderson, the attorney Ms. Spears had attempted to appoint, then withdrew saying “that is the end for me.”

In March to November of 2009, Britney performed 70 shows in her Circus tour. In April of 2009, Britney began her relationship with Jason Trawick, her former agent. They were engaged in December of 2011, when Ms. Spears requested that Mr. Trawick was to be added to the conservatorship. This request was denied. However, when Ms. Spears was offered a judging position of X-Factor, and her medical team said it would put undue pressure on her, she was allowed under the condition that Mr. Trawick was present with her. A few months later, Ms. Spears and Mr. Trawick ended their relationship.

From 2013 to 2017, Britney held a performance residency in Las Vegas, as advised by her medical team. In 2019, a second residency was announced. It was canceled 3 months later by Britney via Instagram due to family issues. For almost a year, the public heard nothing from Britney. Fans began to suspect that something was wrong. She posted a video then, to check in and assure that everything was fine, but that only resulted in more suspicions. Ms. Spears had refused to engage in business activities, and Mr. Spears requested stricter privileges in response.

In June of 2021, the world buzzed with news of a hearing for Britney Spears. Fans swarmed the courtroom building in Los Angeles with signs saying “Free Britney.” Before entering, Andrew gallery said “it feels like something is going to happen today.” He was right.

In Britney’s testimony she passionately spoke truths held back for years. She explained the pressure her management team put on her. She told the truth behind the cancelation of the second Las Vegas residency: She was given a choice, and when her management said she didn’t have to do it, Britney explained that it was “like lifting literally 200 pounds off of me.” She revealed that her father, immediately after, put her on Lithium, “a very very strong and completely different medication compared to what I was used to.” On James Spears, she said: “Not only did my family not do a goddammed thing, my dad was all for it. He loved every moment of it. The control he had over someone as powerful as me, one-hundred-thousand percent he loved it.”

“It makes no sense what soever for the state of California to sit back and literally watch me make a living for so many people and be told I’m not good enough.” From 2013-2017, in her Piece of Me Las Vegas tour, Britney Spears performed 248 shows. $13.707 million in box office sales. Piece of Me tour in 2018 tours 9 countries with $54.3 million in ticket sales. Ms. Spears’ earnings in 2017 were estimated at $34 million. In 2018, her net worth was about $59 million. From 2013-2017, Jamie Spears earned $2.1 million from tour revenues, and a $16,000 per month salary. He allowed a $8,000 per month allowance to Britney.

After exposing everything that had gone unseen behind the conservatorship for so many years, she said: “My dad, and anyone involved in this conservatorship should be in jail.” And after 13 years, “I just want my life back.”

As of November 13, 2021, Britney Spears’ conservatorship has ended, marking a new era of freedom for the 39 year old’s life.
Hanging of the Greens 2021

Photos by Marianna Selma

Left: Hornets and Jackets compete in a schoolwide door decorating contest.

Right: Students participate in a workshop celebrating Hanukkah.

Below: Students eagerly await the banner reveal from each class.

Left: The annual pomander craft is always a popular choice amongst students.

Right: Students create a popcorn garland for the Warmth Tree in the Gallery.

Above: Students pose after a session of Diwali festival dancing.