

# JOURNAL-ADVOCATE

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**Section:** Opinion

### Are you listening?

*John Cross, For the Journal-Advocate*

We live in a world of constant communication, phone calls, email, text, 24 hour news, bill boards, television ads, street signs, warning labels, and all of us have dealt with the difficulties that arise when our systems of communication break down. Ever been in a one sided conversation where you can't get a word in edgewise? Ever been in a room when everybody is talking at the same time and no one is being heard? Ever wondered whether or not your tiny little voice can have any impact on the world? These topics and more are the subject of the current exhibition in the Peter L. Youngers Fine Arts Gallery. One of the truly amazing things about this show is the sheer amount of time and effort it took to get it here. The artworks themselves each required about 200 man hours to complete. The sculptures are made of materials like, sheet metal, steel, formed plastic, cast iron, wood, and a host of electronic gadgets like microphones, receivers, MP3 players, and speakers, not to mention thousands of fasteners, wires and gallons of wood glue. It took seven people, students, ranchers, teachers and artists, two 12-hour days to install the work. More amazing still is the fact that the artists make this work with no financial gain in mind. For them monetary reward is the furthest from their minds, they delight in the opportunity to share their unique perspective with the community and truly enjoy traveling the country, meeting people and talking with them.

Tone Deaf, a multi media, large scale sculptural installation by up and coming sculpture team Alison Ouellette-Kirby and Noah Martin Kirby from St. Louis is on display now through Nov. 12. During an argument the couple had, over this or that, they suddenly realized that they were both arguing the exact same point but from two different directions. This argument inspired a discussion on their communication and ultimately inspired the four interactive sculptures in this show. As you walk through the gallery space you are confronted by large and repeating motifs, circles, cones, squares and rectangles, however these works do not affect your sight alone. Every artwork is trying to communicate with you not only visually but audibly as well. Some whisper, others talk, while others require your participation. There is no space within the gallery in which sound is not manifest. Individually, each artwork describes a different aspect of how we communicate, while the installation as a whole works together to define the larger concept of communication.

According to Pete Youngers, these sculptures are unlike anything we have ever exhibited here at NJC. The smallest work stands five feet tall while the tallest is eleven feet and the widest is sixteen. These artworks are huge, filling the space and they look spectacular lit up at night from outside the gallery. You really must visit the gallery to get a true feeling for the scale of the works.

I am extremely proud to be able to share this exhibit with Sterling through the generous support of the NJC Foundation, the tireless efforts of the artists, and the volunteers who helped install the work. It is extremely rare to have artwork of this unique quality and high caliber on our campus and I hope everyone will take advantage of the opportunity to experience the exhibit.

The Peter L. Youngers Fine Art Gallery is located in ES French hall, next to the theatre. The gallery is open on Tuesday through Friday from 12pm-1pm and 2pm-3pm or by appointment through myself, John Cross, or Sandy Kester. The artists will be on campus to discuss their work on Friday, Nov. 12 from 4-5 p.m. during the closing reception.

John Cross is a professor of fine arts at Northeastern Junior College and curator of the on-campus galleries.

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[John Cross, Northeastern Junior College](#)

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