Paper Mache for 1-31-25 by David Read

Last week was a very busy week in the arts and culture world of Yuba-Sutter. Thursday evening, we held a reception for the California Arts Council Board of Directors at the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts (STCA). Then on Friday, we hosted the January board meeting of the Council which is made up of professional artists and arts administrators from all over the state. Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture (YSAC), the local affiliate of the Council, was chosen to host this month’s meeting, which was a really big deal. Then on Saturday, hundreds of creative students and their friends and families poured into the STCA for the annual Scholastic Art & Writing Awards ceremony. YSAC is the northern California affiliate of Scholastic, and it receives and adjudicates hundreds of entries each year across all imaginable genres of art and the written word.

Preparing for the Scholastic event, I recalled fondly my first experiences with their school-based book fairs I attended in elementary school and those my children attended many years later. The Scholastic Book Company is the world’s largest publisher of children’s books. Established in 1920 by Maurice Robinson in Pittsburgh, the company initially focused on publishing a magazine for high school students named "The Scholastic." From its inception, Scholastic aimed to provide young people with engaging and relevant content that would enhance their learning experience. The company expanded its portfolio to include books in the 1940s. Scholastic book fairs are still a cherished tradition in schools, sparking excitement and igniting a love of reading among students. For many children, the book fair is their first experience selecting and purchasing a book, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their reading journey. Scholastic became synonymous with literary classics, introducing generations of children to beloved series such as "Clifford the Big Red Dog", and "Goosebumps." In the late 1990s it secured the U.S. publishing rights for the "Harry Potter" series which propelled Scholastic to global prominence, as the series became a cultural phenomenon that redefined children’s literature and solidified the company’s place in publishing history.

In addition to its success in publishing, Scholastic made significant contributions to arts and education through its Scholastic Art & Writing Awards established just after the company’s founding. The program was designed to recognize and celebrate the creative talents of young artists and writers across the U.S. It remains one of the longest-running and most prestigious programs of its kind, having honored luminaries such as Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, and Joyce Carol Oates early in their careers. Each year, students in grades 7-12 submit their works in categories ranging from painting, photography, and sculpture to poetry, short stories, and journalism. Winners receive gold and silver medals, scholarships, and opportunities to have their work exhibited or published. Beyond the accolades, the program fosters an appreciation for creativity and encourages students to pursue careers in the arts and writing. The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards demonstrate the company’s dedication to fostering the next generation of artists and writers. YSAC is proud to help provide a platform for young talent to shine and to ensure that creativity remains a cornerstone of education and culture for years to come. At our event, several students talked about their winning art submissions or read from their writings. It was standing room only all day. Next up this Saturday, we host the annual Poetry Out Loud competition which will also be held at STCA. Clearly, Yuba-Sutter is rapidly becoming an important center on the Northern California arts and culture scene. More at yubasutterarts.org.