

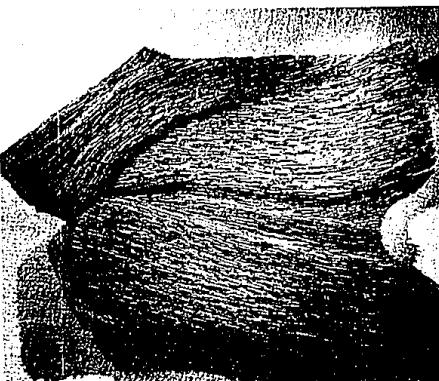
# Creative Living

classified real estate and homes

Corinne Abatt editor / 644-1100

Thursday, July 4, 1985 O&amp;E

(F11)



"La Vida Fuerza" by B.J. Bennett, a 45 by 59-inch handmade paper pulp sculpture, is brilliant in tones of purple, crimson garnet and emerald green.

## Peru, China influence shows in work

By Benita Borenstein  
special writer

Paper pulp and plenty of passion are the striking components of B.J. Bennett's large-scale handmade paper pulp sculptures, "P.M. Voyage Series," on exhibit at the Royal Oak Kidd Association Galleries in Birmingham.

"I take a wholistic attitude toward life, thus in my work I emphasize the interdependence of process, material, concept and image and, especially in this instance, its environment," said the University of Michigan-trained artist.

Bennett doesn't view herself as a purist, one who zeros in on a particular artistic concept. Rather, she sees herself as an artist who "takes everything of life back into my work."

In 1977, she lived and worked for two years in Peru where she experienced the dynamic nature of the Peruvian people as well as their cultural culture. The ancient bright Peruvian ponchos and Andean feather capes captivated her fancy and artistic eye.

In 1980, she traveled to China and visited the Peoples Republic of China with the U.S. Delegation of Textile Artists. While there, she absorbed the possibilities of the colorful silk industry, the forthright folk paintings of Chinese children and the jagged mountain peaks bordering the Li River near Guilin.

She also became involved in tai chi, a form of martial arts that stresses the coordination of mind, emotion, and physical being to achieve one harmonious self.

THIS INTERDEPENDENCE of all things forming a whole is crucial to Bennett's personal and artistic philosophy.

When she returned, she found that her desire to create a series based on her experiences in China made her work too hard to translate all she saw and felt into artistic terms.

When she delved into her unconscious, Peru, the brightly colored ponchos and feather capes emerged and with it the China experience, which developed into what Bennett calls the "Peru-China Connection."

The "P.M." of the exhibition's title refers to Pat Metheny who represents Bennett's growing interest in the little-known artist.

Thus, for Bennett, all three experiences form a rhythmic harmony that she has innovatively translated into a new visual form.

THE PROCESS itself attests to the evolution of experience as new life and meaning are given to the raw materials of plant fiber and paper pulp.

Originally a painter, Bennett found herself with supplies while in Peru. Unrestored, she cut up postcards and began forming assemblages. She then began to cut paintings, finding herself increasingly more interested in constructed paintings and actual paper composition.

While in Ann Arbor, she studied pa-

per making. Because she required a sturdy support as a base for her paper, she turned to a sculptor who taught her to work with clay and molds.

ULTIMATELY, SHE broke out of the beginning rectangular boundaries and into the high reliefs that project from the wall.

Bennett begins with a clay mold, followed by a reverse plaster mold. Wet paper pulp is poured into the mold forming an armature of two-three inches.

On top of this base, she forms a slotting structure. More than 1,000 pieces of paper pulp are then hand-colored lists of dye, acrylic, gouache and inks are inserted into the slotting structure and protrude in a pattern and proportion that moves and changes his according to the light and perspective.

Because all components must work together, if one liner is out of "sync" the entire whole is disrupted.

Bennett's interest in color is revealed by the intensity and excitement the pieces generate. "Dream Voyage" is, in fact, a dreamy golden sculpture of light pastels layered with translucent colors, shades of yellow, gold and white.

Radiant gold metallic and mohair threads are woven through the flowing and glowing piece. "La Vida Fuerza" moves in deep jewel tones of purple, crimson garnet and dark emerald greens. "Through the Clouds" is a display of blues ranging to aqua, a horizon with shards of illac.

ESSENTIALLY, Bennett's handmade paper pulp sculptures reveal process — an evolution and totality of experience.

Recently, Bennett was awarded the University of Michigan Alumni Art '84 Juror Award, the Michigan Alumnae Association Art Award and Foundation for the Arts/First.

Also on exhibition are the monotypes of New York artist Valencia Dubasky and the prints of New Orleans artist Ida Kohlmeier. Using the print process, Dubasky's single-print pieces on Japanese paper are like paintings or collages on paper.

Using her familiar subject of animals — cows, sheep, bulls, stags — Dubasky consciously alludes to the cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira. She takes the primal image and reduces it even further to the rectangle, table perhaps its tiny legs holding up a vessel as a kind of trophy.

THE IMAGES are figurative but at once abstracted and primitive. The tiny heads on bulky bodies, the bodies or animals sprawling whimsically lend a touch of humor to Dubasky's work.

Kohlmeier's playful symbols, their warmth and color give her monotypes a sense of celebration and joy. Art News has declared this "Ida Kohlmeier Month," capping her 30 year career.

The three-artist exhibition extends through Saturday. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. The gallery is at 107 Townsend St., Birmingham.

While in Ann Arbor, she studied pa-

## In focus

### Remembering Wright, Calder

By Carol Azizian  
staff writer

Setting: Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Characters: Pedro E. Guerrero, architectural photographer extraordinaire. Anonymous Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) official, typical bureaucratic bungler.

Fictionalized re-creation of conversation:

MOMA official: Guerrero, we're commissioning you to take aesthetically pleasing photographs of a historically important Frank Lloyd Wright building — the chapel at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. We promise to reward you handsomely.

Guerrero (something clicks inside his brain): What a break! A major museum is giving me exposure! I'll probably earn at least \$100 for this assignment.

MOMA official (smug, sarcastic): Good work, Guerrero. A week's work, an hour's wages. Here's your \$1.50. Not bad for a beginner.

Guerrero (shy, shocked, thinking to himself): That job wasn't worth getting my suit out of the cleaners for. It's not even enough for the cab fare home.

he price tag on the photograph of Frank Lloyd Wright's chapel has skyrocketed since that fateful day in 1948 — and so has Guerrero's career.

ARCHITECTURAL Forum eventually paid Guerrero a handsome price to publish his picture in the magazine. Galleries in New York and Chicago sell 16x24-inch prints of the original for \$300 to \$450.

At one time the Mexican photographer's most prized possession — the last portrait taken of Wright before he died — is going for \$750.

Last week, Steelcase Inc., a leading designer and manufacturer of office furniture, displayed a selection of Guerrero's photographs of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, artist Alexander Calder and sculptor Louise Nevelson in its Southfield showroom.

The 67-year-old "recorder of history" from New Canaan, Conn., shared stories about three giants of the art world. "All three felt a great sense of individual identity," he said.

That same need, however, wasn't the driving force behind Guerrero's artistic achievement. "I never looked for (success)," he humbly admitted. "I was just in the right place at the right time."

It was more than sheer luck that got Guerrero into the prestigious all-boys apprentice school called Taliesin West in Paradise Valley, Ariz. It was the combination of guts, grit and talent.

After studying at Los Angeles Art School, Guerrero returned to his native Arizona to work with his father. "I was a flunkie in a sign shop. You can dignify it by saying I was a prep boy," he said.

He was with his father for 14 to 15 years. Guerrero decided to take a chance and visit Wright. He showed him photography samples — "a mixed bag" including a sentimental picture of a little girl and a dog, two or three nudes and a still life of a plaster with ham and eggs.

Coincidentally, he arrived the day after Wright's photographer had quit and he got the job.

"I was terribly young and inexperienced when he gave me the one chance I needed," the photographer recalled.

"He was a small-town kid. He exposed me to great music, art, literature and even taught me how to play the piano," Guerrero said.

Guerrero's life at the Taliesin fellowship included snapshots of apprentices in their day-to-day chores — farming, canning and preserving — as well as taking photos of building designs for major museum exhibits.

ALTHOUGH his career was interrupted only a year after it started — he was drafted into the Air Corps — Guerrero's working relationship with Wright continued for 19 years.

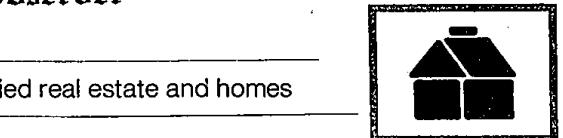
Using her familiar subject of animals — cows, sheep, bulls, stags — Dubasky consciously alludes to the cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira. She takes the primal image and reduces it even further to the rectangle, table perhaps its tiny legs holding up a vessel as a kind of trophy.

THE IMAGES are figurative but at once abstracted and primitive. The tiny heads on bulky bodies, the bodies or animals sprawling whimsically lend a touch of humor to Dubasky's work.

Kohlmeier's playful symbols, their warmth and color give her monotypes a sense of celebration and joy. Art News has declared this "Ida Kohlmeier Month," capping her 30 year career.

The three-artist exhibition extends through Saturday. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. The gallery is at 107 Townsend St., Birmingham.

While in Ann Arbor, she studied pa-



JERRY ZOLINSKY/staff photographer

Pedro Guerrero speaks about his photograph of an important Frank Lloyd Wright building, the chapel at Florida Southern College. The Museum of Modern Art paid

him \$1.50 for the photograph in 1948. Above is the last portrait taken of Frank Lloyd Wright. It is in his studio before he died in 1959.

photos for a book. The idea was before its time. Publishers turned him down, saying Calder's work wasn't important enough, that men have eaten their words before. Guerrero's photos now grace the pages of several Calder books.

Shortly after Calder died in 1976, Guerrero met the third artistic giant — Louise Nevelson — through a mutual friend, art patron Jean Lipman. The pictures he took were eventually incorporated in Lipman's book about the famous sculptor.

"She (Nevelson) is a marvelous character. She had a terrible time overcoming resistance because she was a woman. At one time, the (art world) was reluctant to give women credit for anything."

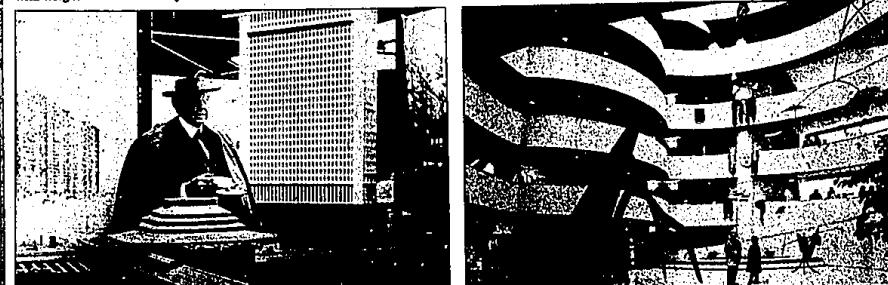
Guerrero photographed Nevelson in her bizarre studio, dressed with layers of fabrics and a mutual friend always covering her head. When she's in formal wear, she puts on a black velvet riding hat.

In one shot, her eccentric look and garish clothes contrast with the stark white walls of a sanctuary in St. Peter's Church in New York City, which she designed.

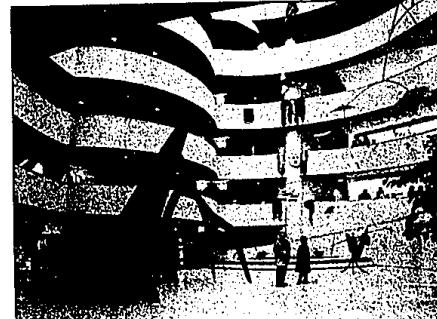
Guerrero also entered the "inner sanctum" of Nevelson's expansive home in Little Italy in New York City to shoot pictures of her at work.

"Every room is a repository for her art work," he said. "She has collected hundreds of things — tin cans, odd pieces of lumber, a cow weather vane. Someday, she will put them all together to make pieces of art that will sell for millions of dollars."

Someday, Guerrero might gather all of his photographs for a book on the three artists.



In Guerrero's photograph of Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect is wearing his characteristic pork pie hat, stiff collar, flowing tie and wide cape. It was taken in 1963 at his retrospective exhibition at a pavilion on the present site of the Guggenheim Museum. The model is "Wingspread," home for Herbert Johnson of the Johnson Wax Co.



Guerrero's photograph shows a meeting of the work of two giants of the arts — Alexander Calder's sculpture displayed in the Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.