

Moving beyond photo-realism

By Manon Meigs
special writer

The reactions of people coming to see the two-artist exhibition at the Robert Kild Gallery were almost predictable — first an audible gasp, then a succession of "wows."

It's not difficult to see why. The representational paintings by Brian Curtis and Robert Gnielwek, although totally different in style and content, have a powerful impact.

In seven large canvases from a series entitled "Frieze of Life," Curtis mostly depicts two nude or half-nude male and female figures in attitudes that convey subtle tension — or even despair — with decidedly erotic overtones.

Curtis's treatment of light is masterly, particularly in his luminous, silky and ruddy flesh tones. The figures are placed in one half of the painting; the remainder of the space (a room) is an area of opaque, flat paintwork, often lit by a single window.

The starkness of setting is emphasized by no other furniture than a chair — obviously, no clutter of objects is allowed to detract from the action/interaction between the couple.

The artist says that the frozen,

review

static quality of his fingers relates to an interest in the 13-14th Century, Florentine artist Giotto. "One might title the series, 'Tagmar Bergman meets Giotto,'" he remarked.

Curtis also said he was influenced by Greek mythology for the casting of his 20th Century protagonists. The male in "Minotaur" pulling a tee-shirt over his head with elbows raised does, in this analogy, resemble the head of a bull with the body of a man. It's anyone's guess whether the accompanying woman is Penelope or Ariadne.

Michigan artist, Robert Gnielwek's paintings of a familiar, urban American, go beyond photo-realism. Mostly painted at night or in twilight, his hot, neon colors realistically reflect symbols such as motorway cabins, the "open 24-hours" diner with a menu of fried chicken, hot dogs and egg cream; liquor stores next to crumbling, art-deco movie theaters, cars, billboards and garish signs.

Please turn to Page 4



"Fremont-Vegas," a 40-by-56-inch oil, shows Robert Gnielwek's continuing interest in the urban landscape, but his growth is reflected in his increased adeptness in composition and the handling of light.



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jazz selections. Graduated from Cass Technical High School, she went on to earn a bachelor of science degree in music education from Wayne State University.

The concert begins at 10:30 a.m. after brunch, and ends approximately at noon. Tickets are \$5.50 and \$3.50 for coffee and concert only.

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