

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Pat Seiter's camera goes where few tread

Some people collect antiques, coins, dirty laundry and just about any type of memorabilia.

Pat Seiter collects souls. They hang in black and white on the walls of her Bloomfield Hills portrait studio.

Seiter of Bloomfield Township is one of a handful of photographers in the country to employ a crafty method known as dramatic black and white photography, made popular by Californian Josef Kadi, whose work was shown at the Detroit Institute of Arts earlier this year.

Technically, the approach is merely setting the mood to enhance a subject's personality. A case of striking a dramatic balance among lighting, field of depth and a subject's natural expressions.



Dramatic: Black & white photographer Pat Seiter

Yeah, right. And painting is just a mundane exercise of putting paint on a canvas.

Getting a subject to open up and show their natural personality, however, isn't something your typical photographer can read in a how-to guide.

After years of experience and an innate ability to put people at ease, Seiter's work has a stark intimacy. Looking through her portfolio of faces from drooling infants to serious-minded executives. It's as if the essence of her subjects are known immediately.

"I can reach into their personality," she said. "It may take five or six rolls, but I can get a part of their soul."

Sound mystical? Maybe. But so are things called faith, art and life.

A look for posterity
For a moment, when it's just her subject and her Hasselblad single-reflex camera, there's a calm assuredness. Staring into the lens for posterity, it's easy to be overcome with the foreboding of waiting to enter a confessional in search of redemption.

And that's not mere speculation.

What: The Portraits of Pat Seiter
When: Through August
Where: Barnes and Noble Bookstore, 6575 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills;

Without missing a beat, she pointed me to the stool in front of the camera, then began to rearrange the lights in her studio, placing a filter on one of the three lights.

Suddenly, a flash and a click. Oops, she laughed. She was definitely having fun. As for me, I was definitely self-conscious.

"People will automatically show me their personalities," she said. "I just try to have fun with them. I've made this place my little castle."

Click. Click.

For Seiter, more laughter, more fun. As for me, more self-consciousness.

It wasn't always easy for Seiter, 44, to laugh. She admits that her emotionally tough childhood forced her to grow up before her time.

Raised by her father in Southgate, she struggled to keep the fissures of

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SCULPTURE PONTIAC '97

PUTTING SCULPTURE BACK ON A PEDESTAL



Hung up: Veteran sculptor Hank Adams' cast glass art blends a devilish outlook and a craftsman's innovation.



Baro Bones: Matthew DeGenaro's "Bone People," made from molds of turkey bones, resonates with a minimalist refinement.



War memories: Robert Biel's "Blow the Boat," is a mixed media construction that recalls the chilling reality of war.

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Add resourceful and tenacious to the gritty reputation of metro Detroit sculptors.

While many local galleries shy away from sculpture exhibits because of the perceived difficulty of selling the three-dimensional work, that's hardly deterred the proliferation of the most tactile of all art forms.

On the contrary, the community of sculptors continues to thrive despite inadequate attention by private galleries and public museums.

The most compelling indication of the range of local talent can be seen in "Sculpture Pontiac '97," works from 66 artists in eight indoor and outdoor sites around downtown Pontiac.

"This simply needed to be done," said John Cynar of Birmingham, who co-curated the exhibit with Mary Fortuna, a sculptor and arts advocate from Royal Oak.

"We set out to do something on a large scale," he said. "The sculpture community seems to be fragmented and we need to create some excitement." Cynar, who ran the Start Gallery in Birmingham until it closed last spring, is looking to relocate his new gallery to Pontiac.

In scope and aspiration, the 100-piece exhibit represents an impressive

overview of established and up-and-coming sculptors, from veteran Hank Adams' devilish hanging cast glass and copper sculpture to newcomer Jennifer Fitzpatrick's tenderly shaped burlesque diaphanous and clay baby bottles.

"We're back to the sculpture glamour days of the 1920s and 1930s," said Cynar. "There's a renewed mystique in craftsmanship. It's back to choosing and exploring the right materials. We're putting sculpture back on pedestals again."

If that's the case, expect to see mostly abstract sculpture on the position of high regard. While "Sculpture Pontiac '97" presents a healthy diversity of shapes, forms and materials, there's a striking absence of figurative works.

Sculptural gems

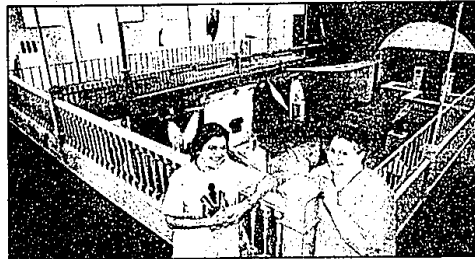
While a group show provides a venue for artists who do not get many opportunities to publicly display their work, "Sculpture Pontiac" feels at times more like taking inventory in a crowded warehouse.

That's not meant as serious criticism. Rather, that's the cold reality for the breakthrough exhibit bursting with many talented artists who can't seem to persuade purveyors of the local art scene of the merit of their works.

For starters, there are several gems in the exhibit that demand a broader, less crowded space. Particularly, Nicolas Van Krijdt's sprawling "Inland Ocean," which needs more room to stretch.

The piece created specifically for the show features a sailboat-like vessel with a mast that nearly stretches to the ceiling of Pontiac's Creative Art Center. An easily accessible sculpture created as an homage to his father, Van Krijdt of Bloomfield Hills, contrasts seemingly free-floating translucent vessels with wooden canoe-shapes in a reincarnation of a sailor's dreamy world.

Other standout works include:
■ A prototype of the human stick figure, Matthew DeGenaro's "Bone



Sculptural diversity: Co-curator Mary Fortuna (right) and Carol Foster, executive director of the Creative Arts Center, one of eight exhibit sites in downtown Pontiac. Nicolas Van Krijdt's sprawling "Inland Ocean" sculpture is in the background.

ART

Two men, two cultures: a case of cultural diplomacy

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Growing up in Zimbabwe and traveling extensively throughout the south-central African continent, Dudley Moore learned about the various cultures, subtle skin tones and lingering disputes among the African people in their struggle for survival.

Meanwhile, far from the massive continent of the Nile and Niger rivers, Bill Murcko, a pale-skinned advertising executive from Birmingham, learned a whole different meaning of tribal warfare in the competitive race for market share.

What sounds like unbridgeable cultural differences looks more like the pieces of an abstract Picasso rearranged into a realistic rendering of two men, their love of art and a budding friendship.

Today, Moore and Murcko are unlikely partners in a professional relationship based on shared artistic interests, an ability to look beyond racial differences and the promise of cultural diplomacy.

In May, Murcko's paintings of the Maasai people of Kenya was featured in a one-man show at Moore's Gallery in Birmingham. The

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Cross cultures: Artist Bill Murcko and Dudley Moore, owner of Moore's Gallery in Birmingham, have built a relationship based on their fascination with the Maasai tribe of Kenya. Moore holds dual citizenship in the US and Zimbabwe.