

## FINE ARTS

## Photographers trace footsteps of the masters

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER

Frank and Kelly Nachtman of West Bloomfield track the footsteps of artists van Gogh, Daubigny, Monet, and Rodin in an exhibition of photographs continuing through Friday, Oct. 31 at the Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery.

The husband and wife team traveled to France twice to capture one of the consequential centers in the world of art history. Daubigny's studio, van Gogh's grave, Monet's gardens in Giverny, and the Louvre put one in the mood to hop a plane as the Nachtmans follow the route of the masters.

"Everyone can associate with Paris and France; it's a very romantic place," said Kelly Nachtman. "And most people know of artists like Matisse and van Gogh, so nearly everyone can appreciate these photos."

Nachtman and her husband Frank have a passion for art, sculpture and architecture. She studied photography and fine art at Wayne State University and manages the Fine Arts Gallery in Southfield. Frank has no formal photography training and works as a chemical engineer. The color and black and white photographs were taken on trips to France in May of 1996 and September of this year.

"I spent a long time reading hoping to see where the artists worked and lived," said Nachtman, who like Frank graduated from Stevenson High School in Livonia. "There were no tour groups so we had a wonderful view of places like the wheat field in Auvers-sur-Oise where van Gogh painted his last painting.

## Photography of France

**What:** The Livonia Arts Commission presents Kelly and Frank Nachtman's color and black and white photographs, which focus on one of the great art centers of the world. Ten percent of the sales go to the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute in memory of loved ones who died from cancer.

**When:** Through Friday, Oct. 31. Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Thursday; until 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and 1-4 p.m. Sunday.

**Where:** Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery, 32777 Five Mile Road (east of Farmington Road).

ing 100 years ago. This last time we went to Southern France and Arles where van Gogh spent about three years. The house he lived in was destroyed in the war but just walking the streets and seeing what he saw gave you an idea of the environment in which he created the work."

The Nachtmans visited Monet's Garden in Giverny in May of 1996 when it was so cold Kelly purchased gloves to warm her hands enough so she could work. The Japanese garden and bridge reveal the beauty that inspired Monet's well-known paintings. Monet's house is one of Nachtman's personal favorites because it's "just as colorful inside as out" and reminds her of his paintings of pink, green and yellow." Today, the house remains the same as when

Monet lived there, pink with turquoise shutters and a green staircase.

"You can see how important color was to him; he was surrounded by it," said Nachtman. "The gardens he created, all of his belongings are still there, his palettes and easel."

Located 15 miles outside of Nice, the Colombe d'Or (Golden Dove Hotel and Restaurant) in Saint-Paul-de-Vence was the backdrop for many discussions between the masters.

"Artists like Matisse and Picasso had lunch there," said Nachtman. "The waiters allowed the artists to pay for their meals with their paintings. Now, you go inside and it's like a little museum and you can have dinner under a Matisse."

Cafes were popular places for artists to congregate and discuss their work. Although few exist today, the Poulibet in Montmartre is a favorite of Picasso and van Gogh, remains.

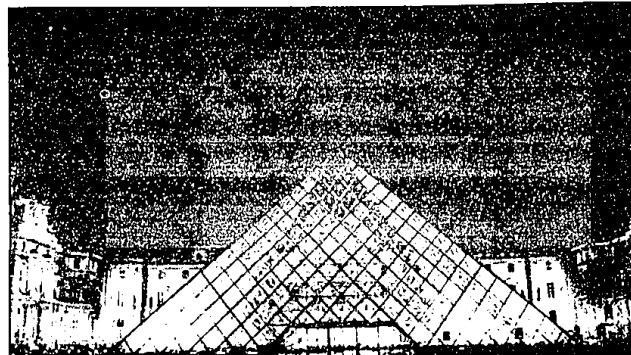
"We tried to capture what you see on the streets, the shuttered windows and flower boxes," said Nachtman. "Cafe scenes are a big part of Paris. The seats are with their backs to the restaurants so you can watch the world go by."

Few of the images, including the cafes, contain people; no easy trick in Paris.

"We got up many mornings at 5 a.m. because it's a very busy city," she said.

**Project obstacles**

Capturing scenes sans people and enduring the bitter cold weren't the only problems confronting the Nachtmans during that first trip. Gray days played havoc with the light. The second



The Pyramid: The recent entrance addition to the Musee du Louvre by American architect I.M. Pei is a controversial one.

time around the Nachtmans were prepared to take the more than 1,000 photographs. They are still sorting through the images deciding which to exhibit in the future.

"Typically in Europe you get a lot of overcast days so we bought filters and polarizers and ended up not having to use it because the weather was beautiful."

At the Musee du Louvre, first constructed as a fortress in 1190, the two encountered yet another obstacle to their project. Unlike museums in the states, they were able to photograph without permission but for a few exceptions.

"You are able to take photo-

graphs but no flash and no tripod," said Nachtman. "Not even on the exterior of the Louvre can you use a tripod. A guard was kind enough to remind us but not confiscate the film while we were shooting the exterior at night."

The architecture of the Louvre and Notre Dame Cathedral were among Frank's favorite. A dramatic photograph of the Eiffel Tower, built for the Universal Exhibition of 1889, was taken at ground level looking up. The Eiffel Tower appears in several of the Nachtman's photographs as it is one of the largest structures in Paris and an internationally known symbol for the City of

Light. In a daytime photograph, the Louvre Museum in Paris looks incongruous with its contemporary Pyramid entrance. Bathed in the gold light at night, it's majestic.

"It's easy to navigate around Paris because you can always see the Eiffel Tower, one of two of the largest landmarks," said Nachtman. "Paris is absolutely gorgeous at night. All of the monuments are there. Standing in the background the Eiffel Tower looks up, it's absolutely massive. And the Louvre, there's still a lot of controversy surrounding the Pyramid. Some people love it; some people hate it."

"From a historical aspect, the Eiffel Tower is really an engineering feat for being constructed at the turn of the 20th century," said Frank Nachtman. "All of Paris is stimulating for the engineering mind."

On the couple's first trip in 1996, Notre Dame's famous towers were covered with scaffolding. When they returned in September the gargoyles were sitting high atop the shiny clean facade. They climbed 387 spiraling steps to spotlight the view of the legendary gargoyles.

The only double exposed photograph features the Eiffel Tower and the makeshift tribute to Princess Diana outside the Pont de l'Alma tunnel where she was killed in a car accident.

"It was a few weeks after the accident and people had left notes," said Nachtman. "It's kind of breathtaking reading all those notes in different languages."

The Nachtmans nearly missed taking that first trip when Frank's father Tom, who was suffering from lung cancer, took a turn for the worst. The Nachtmans will donate 10 percent of their sales to the Karmanos Cancer Institute in memory of Frank's father, Kelly's grandmother, and friends who died from cancer. Frank chose the Institute because for six years he worked as a research assistant in the neurological department at Wayne State University School of Medicine. It was here Frank honed his photographic skills by generating photographs of cell cultures and tissue slides.

"We chose the Karmanos Cancer Institute because they're highly involved in research," said Frank. "That's where I wanted the money to go to, not administrative detail."

The Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, one of the nation's leading cancer research, treatment, education and outreach centers, originally united the Michigan Cancer Foundation, Meyer L. Prentiss Comprehensive Cancer Center, Wayne State University, and the Detroit Medical Center in 1994. One year later, Peter Karmanos, Jr., founder of Compuware, donated \$15 million in memory of his wife Barbara Ann who died from breast cancer at age 46. Today, the organization named in her honor, sees 6,000 patients each year.

"In Michigan this year, 50,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer; 20,000 will die," said Karmanos spokesperson Pat Lucier. "Nationally, they expect 1.35 million people to be diagnosed and 550,000 deaths. Those are staggering facts."



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