



This photograph of ice fishermen shows the artist's concern with a situation that is in the midst of change. It was in the recent exhibition at the museum in Paris.



Taken in West Virginia several years ago, this Benson photograph conveys the message of a quiet landscape that could be about to undergo either a storm or moment of sunshine.

# Local photographer wins his laurels in Europe

By CORINNE ABATT

No sooner had the two-man photography exhibit at Pontiac Art Center closed last April than photographer Steven Benson was off to France. Benson, 25, graduated from the Center for Creative Studies in 1976. Since then he has had a rather phenomenal career in his chosen field. Only recently has he gotten over being scared of the success which seems determined to seek him out.

It was well over a year ago that he "decided on a whim" to show his work to the curator of photography in the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris.

"He looked at my work and selected 15 out of 60. He actually scared me. I was surprised he would see me on such short notice. As it turned out he really had to talk me into it, (exhibiting in the 1979 exhibition of photography in the museum). I didn't think at the time I

was ready for that type of exhibition," Benson said.

Later he sent some more photos to the curator and ended up with a total of 23 in the exhibition.

THAT'S SOME INDICATION of the pattern of Benson's career. He takes his portfolio into many museums, expecting at least some rejection, but comes away with acceptances. He told that same curator in Paris that he would like to donate one of his photographs to the museum and the man countered by telling him the museum planned to buy six of them.

He is also scheduled to have his work in the Photographers' Gallery in London. So far this year in addition to the shows in Paris and at Pontiac Art Center, his work has been in a juried group show at Detroit Focus Gallery, the Fourth Street Photo Gallery of New York City, the Detroit Historical Museum "Pewabic Pottery" show and the

Reccontres International de la Photographie, Arles, France. This latter, he said, is one of a growing number of international festivals devoted to photography being held in Europe.

"Arles is the best known, and another just started in Venice."

This was the second year in a row Benson's work was accepted for the Arles show. Saying it's worth the effort to submit for this show, Benson said the first prize is a trip around the world.

HIS RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENTS in 1978 is almost as impressive. They include the Silver Medallion of Versailles by Photo Universe of France.

In addition to collections such as the American Museum of Natural History and the Bibliotheque National in Paris, Benson's work frequently appears in magazines. Just recently he dropped off his portfolio at American Photo magazine. The next day the editor invited him into her office.

"The layout was already on her desk," Benson said. "She told me that those were the pictures they would like to reproduce."

The issue containing Benson's work is scheduled to coincide with a show he will have at a gallery in the Soho district in New York City next September.

Talking quietly about these various shows, Benson said, "Each step gave me more confidence in terms of places to exhibit."

His approach, unless someone hears about his work and invites him to participate in an exhibit, is to make an appointment and take his portfolio in to be looked at.

He said that in a short span of time two museum curators who looked at his portfolio had totally different opinions of which photographs they liked and which they didn't.

"It really goes back to the artist," Benson said, "and what he likes."

"FINDING A PICTURE," he said, "is kind of a magical thing. Something catches my eye. . . . My photography has grown out of a portraiture kind of image to subject matter which appears to undergo the greatest amount of change through photographic representation. Something is usually in the process of revolutionary change. It is the 'something is going on while we watch it' kind of thing."

Benson who has been going back and forth to Europe regularly of late said, "I like to photograph most when I travel — there is a newness, a kind of freshness — it seems like I don't miss a thing."

While he has had great success being his own business agent, Benson, like many other artists, would like to somehow free himself from the time it takes away from his photography.

"It takes a lot of time to put together exhibitions," he said. "I'd like to take a year just to photograph."



Success came quickly and Steven Benson wasn't sure at first that he was ready for it. (Staff photo by Dick Kelley)

## Lee Van Paassen stars in 'Mary of Scotland'

Lee Van Paassen takes the title role in "Mary of Scotland," produced by Monomy Theater, the home of Ohio

University Players, in Chatham, Mass., this summer.

Ms. Van Paassen is a Farmington resident who attended Marygrove College, Madonna College, and the University of Detroit, where she earned her bachelor of fine arts degree.

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