

Old hand-colored photographs find new popularity

By Jack Zucker
Special writer

Any serious photographer who has used color film knows the gratifications involved as well as the frustrations.

Aside from the anxiety about archival permanence, there is also worry about control. The worker in black and white not only has a large variety of papers and chemicals to choose from, but more darkroom freedom. On his side are not only many ways to control contrast and alter tone, but also an affordable supply of materials.

For these reasons, some photographers have chosen the hand-painted photograph, an old process that was thoroughly developed by late 19th century Japanese studios. The Japanese believed a photograph without color

was like a plate of rice without fish, and many excellent painters were available to do the work.

Pierce Street Gallery in Birmingham has an exhibit, "The Painted Photograph," which continues to Feb. 13. In it are samples of this still-living tradition and among them, several of the Japanese prints that started it all.

The most notable photographer in the show, Alice Steinhart, wrote, "I began painting with color on black and white after some initial work with color slides and prints. . . . I felt limited by having no choice in the colors presented from life."

THOUGH THE USUAL painted photograph tends to be subtle, Ms. Steinhart works in the area in which Kodachrome and Cibachrome show their combined strength — vibrant,

primary colors. Ms. Steinhart's photographs contain more painting than expected. Brush strokes and paint textures appear on her prints, sometimes altering the photographic line.

Her "Tree" series, a portfolio of 22-by-28-inch prints, is striking for its geometry. My favorite is "Secrets," a portrait of a pink and black house front. The shadows matching the black door frame hint of a private life inside. The image is redolent of smiling perfection.

"Cactus" and "Trinity" will also interest the lover of color and energy. Local talent is also shown. Steve Benson of Oak Park has done a great deal with his three precisely painted prints. His color is subtle and sometimes strikingly surreal. His photograph of a girl in a hospital, "Linda," is moving and graphically clean. The

tubes are everywhere, the pink skin, the white sheets — hint of the beauty that often accompanies vulnerability. "Window," a cellar window surrounded by green and brown leaves, is clean and enjoyable.

JOANNE LEONHARD of Ann Arbor shows an image of an old pipe stove in a corner. All is pure, high-contrast photography except for the light blue clouds painted on the stove panel. In reality, they would never be there. But Ms. Leonhard's art has concealed her surrealism so well, I had to look twice.

Rita Dibert is a local surrealist and expressionist who works with infra-red black and white film. She shows us everyday scenes in a different light, a silver trailer on Netter Island, Fla., people near instant photograph booths. Some of her images represent everyday life in humorous

situations. Patrick Young of Ann Arbor does the kind of subtle work with browns and tans one sees most often in this genre. But, he does it with consummate skill, worthy of his master, Christopher James (whose work is also in the show).

Young's "Shower Curtain" is just that, the top of an off-white shower curtain, rendered in subtle tones. His "Atrium," which shows a roof light in a commercial building, isn't the kind of atrium one would expect, but Young delivers accurate form and fine rendition of mood.

If Young is slightly reminiscent of New Realist painting, Bill Turner works almost directly in the genre. "Laundramat," a rendition of the familiar city structure, has all kinds of interesting pinkish light flowing out store windows and yellow light coming from a telephone booth.

CARLOS DIAZ OF Ann Arbor is a conceptualist. That is, he takes nine good photographs of ice shanties and presents each in a segment of a 3 by 3

square. The colors are good, the design is good, the local addresses of the shanties will interest most viewers, but I am always rearranging such photographs.

I can find at least two other ways to rearrange the images and both seem just as good. My humble opinion is that conceptualists ought to learn from Duane Michals and start dealing with human situations.

Alex Kayser of New York takes portraits of famous artists and then paints with aluminous colors. People who recognize the names of Philip Perlestein, George Segal and Louise Nevelson may love these idiosyncratic photographs, which have a touch of wry humor.

But, I believe the photographer was so flattered at being allowed to show with these contemporary "greats" that he began to feel too pleased with himself.

Pierce Street Gallery is upstairs at 217 Pierce. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Workshop for therapists to be led by Gail Parker

Establishing Priorities — Personal Skills for Therapists" will be the theme of a one-day workshop sponsored by the Michigan Alcohol and Addiction Association on Monday, Feb. 15.

Psychologist Gail Parker will lead the workshop, which will take place at

Bonnie Brook Golf Club in Detroit.

Ms. Parker has a weekly segment on WXYZ-TV, Channel 7 News. In the segment, called "Reach-Out," she deals with a variety of human relationships.

She is the associate director of Center for Contemporary Psychology in

Birmingham, in addition to her guest appearances on local TV and radio talk shows. Ms. Parker is in demand as a lecturer and workshop-leader statewide and has worked for major universities and associations.

Her workshop is especially designed

for helping professionals.

Ms. Parker will utilize lecture, discussion and experiential formats to present her work.

Lunch is included in the workshop fee. Inquiries will be taken by the MAAA office, 352-2340.

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