Clutter can help organize photo

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

MONTE NAGLER

In past columns, I've discussed the need to keep things simple, express a single idea, and keep backgrounds simplified to assure that the viewer's attention will be directed toward the main subject.

But there are times when using the environment as a backdrop can add an extra dimension to your pictures. You might even say that "controlled clutter" can add important information to a photograph and make it easier to understand and relate to.

In a picture of a person, for example, what surrounds the subject can tell us something of his or her interests, job or social status. You'll often see environmental portraits where much is learned about the person by the "clutter" in the finished picture. This applies to non-portrait photographs, too.

The accompanying picture shows an almost 200-year-old log cabin in Pine Mountain, Ga. At first glance, the shot may appear too cluttered. But a close inspection will show how all the elements of the picture work together to produce a photograph with lots of impact.

The dark window was off-center and I carefully placed the chairs, broom, ax and saddlebag in strategic locations to make the picture "flow" and produce an overall rustic feeling. Even the pile of logs behind the left chair was carefully positioned to add to the effect.

All in all, this is a photograph that "tells a story" of the past. The picture works because of "controlled clutter," the careful use of complementary items to compose the shot.

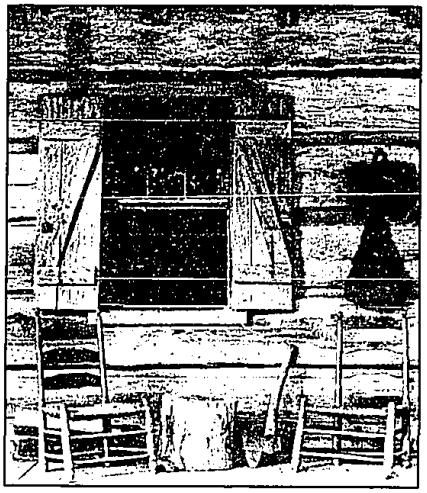
As in all good photography, pay attention to lighting and camera angle and choose the lens that will enable you to include all that you want in the viewfinder. Be sure to use an aperture small enough to place all items in your composition in the camera's depth-of-field.

So organize your photographic thinking by adding a little "clutter" to your shots!

Short shot

Monte Nagler's spring photography classes begin Tuesday, *April 20, at the Farmington Community Center* (phone 477-8404 for registration information) and Wednesday, April 21, at The Community House in Birmingham (644-5832). Take one of the popular classes to sharpen up your photographic skills.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave a him message by dialing 953-2047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then his mailbox number, 1873.



Clutter control: *This Monte Nagler photograph gets its impact and tells the story by the use of "controlled clutter." Notice how the many items in the composition complement one another.*

Artist, Prince connect

BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

An area artist who has a connection with a television "king" has now found one, possibly, with the musical Prince.

In 1991, Ralfie, who also models at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, was contacted by representatives of "The Cosby Show" who wanted to put one of his paintings in the house set of star Bill Cosby's character. The painting, "Garage Sale," was seen in the character's kitchen on the popular NBC-TV show.

Now Ralfie senses a connection with Prince, who will perform at the Fox Theatre in Detroit Thursday and Friday.

"This is an honor," Ralfie said. "We have to inspire one another."

In 1988, the artist and model sent Prince some of his posed photos. He also sent Prince one of his paintings, his rendition of the Prince song "Purple Rain," and a letter.

When Prince's "Lovesexy" album was released, Ralfie was moved to buy it because Prince's pose on the album cover reminded him of his poses. The song "Dance On" on the record includes references to explosions and people on the beach and the line, "Detroit, what's happening?"

"Everything in the painting was in the words."

More and more people can get to know Ralfie, as Kmart, WalMart and Target will carry 16-by-20-inch prints of several of his paintings. The titles include "Children's Museum," "Harris Estate," "Boarding House," "Across the Street," "Brownstone" and "Town Square."

"They are scenes from Detroit or totally my imagination.

"There's just that warmth (in the paintings) people want to see."

'Purple Rain': *Area artist Ralfie, who models at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, sent this painting he did of Prince's "Purple Rain" to the singer.*

African-American art shown

The Southfield Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority will host "Kuumba Odyssey," an African-American art show and sale, 3-7 p.m. Saturday, April 3, at the Oakland Community College Southfield Campus, 22322 Rutland, Nine Mile between Southfield and Greenfield roads.

Admission is free and open to the public. The show will feature works of about 30 local artists. Paintings, pencil sketches, jewelry, sculptures, ceramics, dolls, African clothing and textiles and other items will be sold.

Proceeds will be used for a fine arts scholarship given annually to a local high school student pursuing a professional career in the arts.

Kuumba is an African word meaning creativity. Odyssey means adventurous journey. "Kuumba Odyssey' is an appropriate title because the show gives the public the chance to become aware of some of the many talented, yet sometimes unknown, artists in the local community, the chapter said.

The event is sponsored by the Arts and Letters Committee of the sorority's Southfield Alumnae Chapter. The committee is responsible for promoting cultural arts in the community and encouraging young artists by exposing their talents and work to the public.

Art grant reviewers sought

An opportunity awaits people with experience or expertise in one or more of the arts disciplines, arts education, non-profit organization management or community/cultural planning.

The Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs is seeking qualified individuals to review art grant applications between mid-June and the end of July.

Reviewers will critique art grant applications, participate on public review panels and make funding recommendations to the council.

To apply, submit a letter of interest to Betty Boone, executive director, MCACA, 1200 Sixth, Suite 1108, Detroit 48226-2461, by Monday, April 12.

In keeping with the council's commitment to cultural diversity, it encourages submissions from a broad cross section in the community to include African-American, Asian, Hispanic and American Indian individuals.

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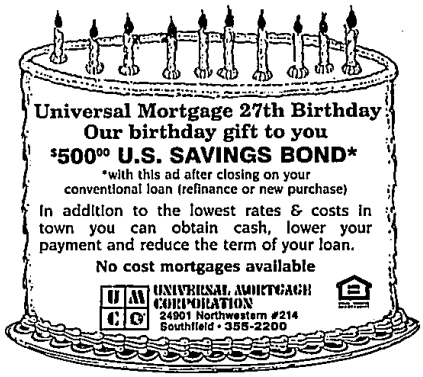

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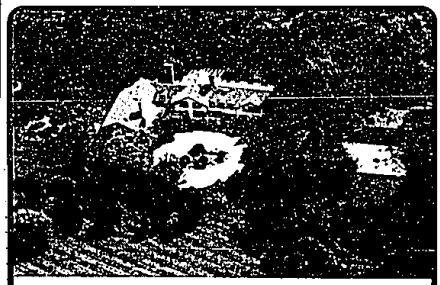

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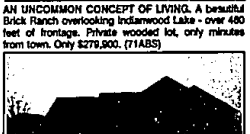

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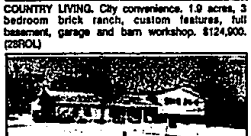

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