

Romantic notion

Photographer focuses on beauty

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Randy Gerwatowski creates a world of beauty through the art of photography. Instead of documenting the death and decay surrounding us every day, his photographs romanticize life, instilling a peacefulness that invites you into his world.

In his first one-man show, Gerwatowski exhibits color and black and white photographs through July 11 in the newly opened Groove Gallery and Boutique, 1203 Lincoln (10% Mile), Royal Oak.

"Randy's composition is very intriguing. I like his choice of materials that aren't necessarily new," said gallery owner Dawn Hulme.

Old fishing lures, a mouse skeleton, diseased leaves cut from a dumb cane plant, Gerwatowski focuses on found objects to trigger the viewer's imagination.

"I look for the things that people discard. I look for their color, texture, design. It's the concept of taking something ugly, discarded, and turning it into something beautiful. Dead flowers, dead animals are all fair game," the Canton Township photographer said in an interview at the gallery.

"It's the aesthetics that are important to me. It's the concept that you want to show that becomes primary. There's always reasons for the things I put together in a photograph."

A burst of light surrounds a bird, its wings suspended for a fi-

nal flight in "Pigeon in Roses." The curve of its wings pull the viewer's eye upward to a handful of scattered rosebuds. The flowers seem to nurture the creature, enveloping it in delicate pink and red petals, revealing a certain beauty suspended in eerie desolation.

"The concept was, 'Here's a discarded, spent piece of nature found by the roadside, run over by a car. I know with my photography, I can turn that back and make it beautiful again.' Even in death, there's beauty," Gerwatowski said.

"For me, photography is not the technical end of it, how it's produced, it's the aesthetic end. I'd rather see a great concept poorly executed than a poor concept greatly executed."

Gerwatowski uses line, form, balance, color and contrasting light and shadow to draw the viewer into his striking compositions. Many of the images blur, diffused by reality.

In college, Gerwatowski studied not only photography but graphic design, painting and sculpture. It has influenced his work.

"As a kid, I always had a need and desire to reproduce images, to draw, make clay models, wood models. My definition of art is to create individual interpretations of reality," Gerwatowski said.

"Photography is my medium of choice — the colors, inherent texture, the mixture of shadow and light you can't find anywhere else."

'I look for things that people discard. I look for their color, texture, design. It's the concept of taking something ugly, discarded, and turning it into something beautiful.'

Randy Gerwatowski

A long time stem leads the eye upward to an ethereal looking "Sunflower." The straight line of the stem sharply contrasts the lyrical, flowing lines of the background's discarded tropical leaves, creating interest and keeping the eye moving around the composition.

Since earning a bachelor of fine arts degree from Northern Michigan University in 1985, Gerwatowski has worked as a commercial photographer in the Detroit area. He has created images for clients including Detroit Monthly, Ford Motor Co., Saturn Corp., Northland Mall and Detroit Motorcycle Co. In April, a cover Gerwatowski created for a golf supplement appeared in Detroit Monthly and Crain's Detroit Business.

As brush and bold as his images appear, there is no denying there is an artist struggling to emerge. Gerwatowski strives daily to portray commercial photography as an art form just as the legendary Ansel Adams did in 1932 when he founded Group f/64, an organization dedicated to creating straight photography as art.

"I am a commercial artist whose working towards a goal. Part of my vision for showing this is it's more acceptable and more desirable to people. I'm trying to wake up commercial art, commercial advertising. There doesn't have to be a crossover. My work is delineated as art now but I don't think there has to be that line," Gerwatowski said. "I am a com-

mercial photographer but have a fine art prerequisite. I want to incorporate fine art into my commercial photography."

Gerwatowski's photos fit right in at Groove Gallery, which opened June 11.

"The Groove is an unconventional gallery, a gallery without a purpose, said before opening the Groove worked as a costumer for Michigan Opera Theatre. "I basically wanted to showcase local artists who are not well known but are high quality. A lot of galleries are not interested in showing your work unless you're well known. But I also wanted to have cultural items from other parts of the world."

The Groove spotlights ceramic pins patterned with fabric by Glenn Merrilat of Plymouth, ceramics by Becky Bailey and earrings by Leesa Mark of Royal Oak, custom fish tanks in a variety of geometric forms by Bill Hulme of Livonia, raku by Diane Appleton and ceramic dragons and cats by Noelle Appleton of South Lyon, ceramics by Barbara Hulme, Pfeiffer of Brighton and watercolors by Kelly Schmidt of Berkley.

Elsa Trevino of Wixom sews bolts of Guatemalan fabric into Americanized versions of wrap skirts, vests, shorts and caps for kids. Laura May of Royal Oak creates lamps from already fallen birch trees and also chairs and tables with encased facial masks. Jim Caldwell, who co-owns Gotham City Cafe in Ferndale with Dawn Hulme, crafts ceramic mailboxes.

From Guatemala come a hand-carved skeleton chair and bench. On the way from Ecuador are sweaters that, when purchased, aid reforestation efforts in the Ecuadorian Highlands. For each sweater purchased, a tree is planted.

Groove Gallery hours are noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday, noon to 9 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday.

Exhibit coordinator named

Kathleen English of Auburn Hills has been named exhibition coordinator of the Paint Creek Center for the Arts. She is responsible for the center's contemporary art exhibition program.

English has her master of arts degree in painting from Wayne State University and her undergraduate degree in fine arts from the University of Windsor. She has also studied drawing and art history in Florence and Perugia, Italy, through the European Summer Program.

An award-winning watercolor and oil painter, English has shown her work in many na-

tional exhibitions. She earned Best of Show awards in the 1992 All Media Show at the Left Bank Gallery in Flint and the 1991 Women in Art Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow exhibition at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

English has also been in one- and two-person shows at the Brock Center for the Arts in St. Catharines, Ontario, and the Loves Gallery and the A & M Gallery in Windsor, Ontario.

In addition to her PCCA responsibilities, English teaches watercolor and acrylic at the OCC Highland campus.

Education head selected

Elizabeth York of Clarkston is the new education coordinator for the Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester. She is responsible for all PCCA youth and adult classes.

York has a bachelor of arts degree in art, with minors in education and English, from Michigan State University. She has taught watercolor and drawing in the Clarkston Community Education afterschool

enrichment program. She has also served as a volunteer elementary art teacher in Clarkston schools.

The PCCA offers more than 200 studio classes for adults and children each year in painting, drawing, clay and other media. In addition, the PCCA provides workshop opportunities for area Girl Scouts to earn art badges.

Development director chosen

Lynnette M. Tethal of Rochester has been named development director for the Paint Creek Center for the Arts. She is responsible for all PCCA fund-raising activities including the annual Arts 'n Apples Festival.

Tethal is a graduate of the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, with dual majors in fine arts and the history of art. As an undergraduate, she studied in Florence, Italy, and served

an internship as administrative assistant to the Pyke Charity Trust in Auchencrain, Scotland.

She was volunteer chairperson of the 1990 senior pledge program at U-M. She also served as a telemarketing floor manager, recruitment assistant, pledge collection manager and fund-raiser at the university's Office of Development. Tethal was a gallery assistant at the School of Art's Jean Paul Slusser Gallery.

Music club installs officers

The Music Study Club of Metropolitan Detroit has installed these officers and board members:

Bernice Pinsky, president; Elaine Kohner, first vice president; Mildred Charnas, second vice president; Mimi Summers, recording secretary; Ann Ross,

corresponding secretary; Patricia Stobbe, financial secretary; Annette Liberson, treasurer; Vera Rollin-Burke, Janet Landsberg and Joyce Margolin, two-year board members; and Tillie Schkloven, Ann Steinberg and Betty Weiss, one-year board members.

Picture a new lifestyle...

Are you looking for excitement and activity? Privacy and solitude? Do you want to live in the fast lane, or are you ready to slow down?

Whatever your lifestyle, you'll find a home, an apartment or a condominium to match it in today's

Creative Living Real Estate section.

From scenic suburban sites to relaxing rural retreats, they're all just a phone call away.

Observer & Eccentric
CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

644-1070 OAKLAND COUNTY 591-0900 WAYNE COUNTY
852-3222 ROCHESTER ROCHESTER HILLS

