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Queen of folk

Limelight lost in new generation of music lovers



Melanie Falk/DN

Two-artist show incorporates meeting of mediums

BY EMILY PYEATT

The University Place Art Center hopes to convey a precise idea through two different mediums this month.

The name of the art center's new exhibit for October is complementary to the artwork displayed. "Precise Decisions" offers a glimpse into the precision utilized in diverse art mediums.

Oil paintings, watercolors and drawings by Charles Novich, an Omaha artist, and ceramics by Adenna Kravet from Lincoln will make up the exhibit.

Charles Novich's art is a mini-retrospective of a body of work that is fueled by his fascination with the human figure.

While at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Novich studied painting and ceramics but received his inspiration to paint from mentor and artist Steve Roberts.

Roberts reinforced in Novich that "paintings can still be considered art if they are painted realistically," Novich said.

Novich began with sketches of the human figure.

"But the way I work is painstaking; it takes so long," Novich said.

Novich then began photographing his models to serve as references for his paintings and to question what he considered quality composition.

"This led to a more spontaneous style allowing me to refine my ability to render the figure," Novich said.

Novich's interest in the human figure started about two years ago.

"The figure is something in human psyche that is viewed in terms of beauty and of physical being and life,"

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

"Though the songwriters write most of the songs I do... it's clear that no one will ever sing them quite the way I do."

It's not bragging if it's true.

And when those words come out of the mouth of folk-singing legend Joan Baez, nod your head in agreement.

Those lyrics came in 1977 in the song "A Heartfelt Line or Two."

This was long after Baez played Woodstock, long after she served as the "queen of folk," long after her romantic link with the folk king Bob Dylan.

This was long after she marched the streets with Martin Luther King Jr., long after she appeared on the cover of Time magazine and long after she dazzled everyone with her performance at the Newport Folk Festival at the age of 18.

Since that festival in 1959, she's been an icon in folk music; she will treat her Lincoln fans with a concert tonight at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

From her rise to folk fame at Newport to the creation of her latest CD, "Gone from Danger," Baez has always had a knack for the limelight.

"She established herself when folk was re-emerging and became the queen of folk, the female counterpart to what Bob Dylan was," UNL music professor Tom Larson said.

Scott Anderson, also a UNL music professor and lecturer, said it's easy to figure out why Baez is still such a strong figure in the music world after

more than 40 years.

"She has a great voice, and she makes very good choices about what she sings," Anderson said.

Anderson said Baez often doesn't write her own songs, which has kept her from gaining the same larger-than-life reverence accompanied with Bob Dylan.

In an unscientific survey of nearly 50 UNL students, only half recognized the name Joan Baez, and many that did recognize her name couldn't cite a Baez song or even categorize her within the genre of folk music. Those same people all recognized Dylan's name, and most named a few songs that he has written and even hummed a few bars.

"Dylan was a songwriter. He is widely recognized as changing the course of music history the same way The Beatles are," Anderson said. "Baez often sang handed-down music, which is actually the true definition of folk music, but in the 1960s it became unfashionable to become a cover artist."

Baez also isn't straight off of MTV, which makes her unknown to a large portion of young music fans.

"Joan Baez doesn't have the criteria to be a modern-day star," Larson said. "She doesn't dance and doesn't have some funky beats in the background."

Yet Dylan and Baez's following has grown considerably over the years, Anderson said.

"There's this feeling that Dylan was this huge star and that Baez was this huge star, but in retrospect they were against the grain in the 60s. They're much bigger now."

Baez had too much singing talent to go unnoticed, said Randy Snyder, also a professor at UNL who teaches a history of rock 'n' roll class.

And if an artist is going to stay on the scene for 40 years, singing folk is one of the rare genres where it can be accomplished.

"Folk music doesn't sell at the same level pop music does," Snyder said. "But it is specified to a certain loyal clientele."

Folk music touches the people the way other styles of music does not, Larson said.

"Folk music has endured because of the lyrics and the message," he said. "Typically, it's about change and making things better. It has social relevance to people."

"It's not like some punk band that sings 'I hate you. I hate me.' It's catchy for a while, but then you grow up."

But Anderson said it should not be a concern that college students don't recognize Baez's name.

"It doesn't concern me that they don't know her music," Anderson said of his music students. "It does concern me if I play the good stuff and they can't relate to the scenario or the mood."



Courtesy photo

"Gucci," by Kirk Pederson, mixed media

Runways inspiration for exhibit

■ Nebraska native Kirk Pederson explores the American fashion trends in a Haydon Gallery exhibit this month.

BY MELANIE MENSCH

As fashionably frenzied as a New York City runway, Kirk Pederson's abstract paintings take a too-close-for-comfort view of chic popular culture.

Pederson, inspired by fashion advertisements, examines commercialism's extravagance and excess by reducing images to pure color and shape.

The exhibit is on display at the Haydon Gallery, 335 N. 8th St., until Oct. 21. The public is invited to attend an opening reception Friday from 7 to 9 p.m.

Teliza Rodriguez, the Haydon director, said Pederson's paintings separated the elements of fashion ads.

"His art reminds me of New York buildings, covered with layers of posters ..."

Teliza Rodriguez
Haydon director

"His art reminds me of New York buildings, covered with layers of posters ..."

Pederson, a Nebraska native, previously concentrated on "urban landscapes," painting close-up views of street pavement, abandoned cars and deteriorating tiled floors.

Pederson has shifted his focus to the fashion trends of American culture.

Laying pages from Cosmopolitan magazine and pieces of canvas, Pederson soaks each painting with thick acrylic colors like burnt reds, muted blues and tawny yellows.

These drips and drabs of color disguise frayed sections of tyvek, a type of coated paper similar to canvas, which protrudes haphazardly off the sides.

Pederson named some of his works after fashion's leading brands, like Gucci, DKNY and Fendi, to continue his focus on the essence of commercialism rather than specific images.

An art professor at Mt. San Antonio College in California, Pederson received his bachelor's of arts degree from Midland Lutheran College in Fremont. He then studied at San Francisco State University and Claremont Graduate University in California for his master's degree.

Bob Therien, an art professor who taught Pederson at Midland in the 1970s, said Pederson began painting as all art students do, in realism.

"(Pederson's) specific subject is grounded in reality, but then it deviates from that, so you still see some of its realistic properties, but he brings variations in color and brushstrokes," Therien said. "It's juicily painted."

Norman Geske, former director of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, had collaborated with Pederson on his exhibits at the gallery.

"He's extremely gifted," Geske said. "He's a native Nebraskan working today who has established his work on the public scene."

With more than 26 individual exhibitions to his name, Pederson also has pieces in public collections at places such as the Sheldon, the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art in St. Joseph, Mo., and Arizona State University Art Museum in Tempe.

Whether or not Pederson's abstraction of the fashion industry speaks to gallery viewers, Rodriguez said she enjoyed all reactions to his art.

"I like people to come in and have an opinion," she said. "Any comment, either positive or negative, is good. It tells me that they're looking."

Gallery Preview

Precise Decisions

Where: University Place Art Center, 2601 N. 48th

When: Friday, 5:30-7 p.m.

Cost: Free



Courtesy photos

TOP: "Figure #2" by C. Novich, watercolor

BELOW: "Untitled" by Adenna Kravet



by artist discussions at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, and hands-on art activities will be offered for children from 5:30-6:30 p.m. The exhibit will run through Oct. 25.

Novich said.

Novich's works in "Precise Decisions" are a more exact depiction of form and composition, said Gayle Andres, executive director of the University Place Art Center.

"Novich's work seems so deliberate. He uses such wonderful precision and is so sensitive with his intent," Andres said.

Kravet's work illustrates the notion of surface meeting form, she said. Kravet utilizes various techniques within the ceramic medium for surfaces and sculpture.

Kravet said she thinks her work is about function and the celebration of a beautiful, handmade object.

"Her work is sensual and precise and is controlled ceramic work," Andres said. "She creates the most beautiful coffee cups that will be on sale."

While diverse artistic mediums are offered in the "Precise Decisions" exhibition, the show demonstrates how different forms of art can appeal aesthetically to the senses of a variety of people.

"The reason the two artists' work are shown together is that they share a fluid sort of motion that is still so precise and planned even though their mediums are so completely different," Andres said. "Their sensitivities are similar - there is no line or color that is placed without thought."

A consciousness conveyed in an aesthetically beautiful manner is shared between the artists, Andres said.

The University Place Art Center's goal to actively represent local artists and promote visual-arts education will be enhanced by "Precise Decisions."

The exhibit will be accompanied