

## Juried Spiritual Arts Show will be at St. Boniface, March 23-30

by Nancy Sartor

Anyone familiar with the Northeast Minneapolis arts scene has likely seen Nick and Rosemary Heille roaming the halls of the Northrup King Building, or studio hopping at the California Building.

Some could call Nick, a lifelong Northeast resident, and "Rosie," his wife of-nearly 40 years, Northeast's First Couple of the Arts—patrons and volunteers who were active in the arts community years before Northeast was known for its arts' scene.

The Heille's run the Northeast Minneapolis Artist Concierge Service - a business in which they serve as liaisons between artists and buyers - and for the last seven years they have produced a Juried Spiritual Arts Show held annually during Lent.

"We are on a pilgrimage," says Nick Heille. "We're mendicants. We have no home. Does anybody want to take us in next year?" Heille's not taking about being displaced from his Waite Park home, but rather about procuring a venue for next year's Spiritual Art Festival and Juried Art Show. This year the event takes place at St. Boniface Catholic Church (7th Avenue & 2nd Street NE) March 23-30.

The show evolved after the Heille's decided to curate an exhibit that would highlight a variety of religious and spiritual art.

Rosie and I would walk around and see these various studios," recalled Nick, "and what we saw were pieces that had spiritual or religious themes across all genres - acrylics, oils, fabric, sculpture. There was something from everybody."

Heille said he was initially inspired by artist John Guthrie. "John made his living as a photographer doing candid wedding pictures and massive nudes," he recalled. "And in the corner of his studio at the Tyler Street Building he had a piece called 'The Crucifixion' that dominated the whole space. That started the whole process."

Rosie said the show is a way for artists to connect, "It started when we saw a few pieces by people whose spiritual art was a part of their life - part of who they are," she said. "We thought it be neat if people could see this, and we also discovered that the artists enjoyed meeting each other. They'd say, 'You mean, someone else does this? I've always felt so isolated.' A lot of bridges have built and artists have met each other through these shows."

The first Spiritual Art Show was held at Elim Baptist Church, and it has been exhibited at other area churches, including Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran, Holy Triune Lutheran, and Grace United Methodist. Catholic Eldercare has also hosted the show. Northeast



Kendall Bohn's "Shadows of Ancient Stone" (Submitted photo)

Minneapolis Arts Association is credited as co-sponsor of the show.

According to Rosie, the show usually features about 50 pieces in a number of mediums. The only criterion is that the art be religious or spiritual in nature, and that it not be offensive to the host institution. Anyone who wants to show a piece must drop it off at St. Boniface on March 19.

"So far everything that has been brought in has been shown," said Rosie. "We do have a caveat in the rules that says the art cannot be offensive to our host, but we've had no problems. Everyone's been very respectful."

Most of the pieces in prior years have reflected the Christian faith, but the Heille's are quick to point out that the show is non-denominational and non-sectarian. "We've had Christian, we've had Jewish, some Hindi, we had a Muslim woman who won prizes," recalled Rosie. "We're open and we try to reach out to everybody"

The artistic level of We participants ranges, too, from

primitive to professional. Nick said "One year the show featured work by a professional artist whose work commands thousands of dollars, as well as a piece by a street person whose entrance fee was paid by I Love a Parade, a Northeast nonprofit organization that works with homeless women.

"We have seen some very sophisticated artists who were passed over [as winners] for less sophisticated artists because [the latter] were working at their fullest capacity," said Nick. "One year we had a piece that would be classified as 'primitive' or 'folk art,' which had multiple images in it, like a story blanket. This artist put her heart and soul on the piece. When she asked the jurors what advice they could give her, they said, 'Don't take any formal training, it will destroy your creativity.'

This year, four jurors will select winners and divvy up the \$500 cash prize: bronze sculpture and Northeast resident Foster Willey, Jr; Carl and Marilyn Halker, curators of the Bishop's Gallery at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Minneapolis; and Loren Niemi, a professional storyteller who holds degrees in religious education and studio arts.

On March 29 from 7-8:30 there will be a special musical performance by a jazz combo from Mercy Seat Lutheran Church, and by composer/pianist Carl Schroeder.

Schroeder will play an original score he composed after being inspired by painter Kendall Bohn.

"I'll be performing 'A Celestial Triptych,' which was composed in conjunction with a series of three paintings created by Kendall Bohn," said Schroeder. "His paintings are space landscapes that show different perspectives of a system of planets and moons."

Composing to art was new for Schroeder. "I've written music that's been inspired by poetry and other written words, but this is the first piece to go along with painting," he explained. "It might not seem obvious why music inspired by outer space would be at a religious art show, but what I was trying to get at with the composition is that sense of wonder and awe people have felt all through time looking up at the sky."

After the exhibit closes at St. Boniface,, the winning art will likely be displayed at another venue. "Last year they went to the Basilica of Saint Mary," said Rosie, who added that years of artistic patronage have been rewarding for her and Nick. "I'm a librarian by profession, and I've spent years in public schools reading picture books to kids. I think you pick up a love for the visual doing that. It's been fun to watch the arts grow in Northeast."

For more information on the Spiritual Art Festival and Juried Art Show, contact Nick or Rosie Heille of the Northeast Artist Concierge Service at 612-789-6527.