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# Photos & a Lot More

Artist incorporates photography into three-dimensional creations

By JASMINA WELLINGHOFF

Photography JANET ROGERS

**H**anging from the ceiling in Joan Frederick's living room is a very unusual 4- by 3-foot mobile. It's called *Day Clouds*, and it consists of gently swaying photos of clouds, themselves cut out into cloud shapes and attached to wires branching out from a central stem.

This eye-catching but soothing installation is no toy, however. It's a "sculpture with photos" created by the mistress of the house that will be part of Frederick's solo exhibit at Bihl Haus Arts this month. The show is organized in conjunction with the city-wide Fotoseptiembre USA Festival.

"I have the tendency to take photos and play with them," says the artist. Among her other playthings are lamps, chairs, water bowls, purses and other objects, all modified to add unique aesthetic and/or social commentary features. The lamps are especially striking. An elegant example called *The McNay at Night* is a tall glass table lamp whose shade has been replaced by a wide wrap-around photo of the Stieren Center Sculpture Gallery. When the light is switched on, the gallery appears bathed in moonlight.

Another lamp's shade glistens with a rain-soaked picture of the old Liberty Bar on

**Joan Frederick will have a solo exhibit at Bihl Haus Arts this month in conjunction with Fotoseptiembre.**

Josephine Street, and yet another sports a sky-and-clouds shade. The huge images are printed on film that's shaped into shades that are very difficult to make, says Frederick. But she won't reveal details of the process, wanting to protect her trade secret. "I don't know of anybody who is doing what I am doing," she notes. Another visually attractive installation consists of a large circular sky photo suspended above and reflected in the mirrored surface of a round table.

But a substantial part of the exhibit will be about relationships. In dealing with that subject, the artist can turn naughty albeit with a sense of humor. A piece titled *What Men Want* will feature several Queen Anne chairs whose seats bear images you may not want your kids to see. Safe to mention is one showing a woman's face with a zipper sewn across her lips. "What do men want?" asks Frederick



**Frederick takes her photos, plays with them and attaches them to objects. The lamp is called *The McNay at Night* and the shade is a wrap-around photo of the Stieren Center Sculpture Gallery. When the light is on, the gallery appears bathed in moonlight.**

rhetorically while showing me the chairs. “For the woman to shut up and listen to them,” she explains. Another creation with a message is *Caged Bird* featuring a large birdcage lined with a pretty color photo of a reclining woman. “That’s the woman who marries for money,” Frederick remarks nonchalantly.

She’s giving me this tour more than two months before the Bihl Haus opening, and at some point she pauses thoughtfully and says, “I’ll try to do a few more positive pieces about relationships between men and women.” Though her own marriage was not a good example in that regard, she witnessed her parents’ devotion to each other and eventually experienced a sustained loving rapport with a man herself. “It taught me what real love is — respect for each other and mutual interests. I recognized that this type of relationship was possible in romance. Many people don’t achieve it,” she says. But right now her main relationship is with her art.

“Art is the only thing I was good at in school, but it took me all these years to get where I am at this point. I eat it, sleep it, dream it; it’s my life, which is great. I can’t believe I made it,” says the artist, who is in her early 60s.

Bihl Haus Arts director Kellen McIntyre shares the enthusiasm. “I think it’s brilliant the way Joan takes a photo and attaches it to an object and it becomes a sculpture,” she

notes. “She changes common objects into extraordinary things that are often functional, but also charming, witty and poignant. There is definitely a sense of play in the way she can relate a photo to a seemingly unrelated object, and suddenly you can see the connection; it makes sense.”

McIntyre hopes that this Fotoseptiembre show will give Frederick the wider exposure she deserves.

## TWO GREAT INTERESTS

Growing up in Oklahoma, Frederick developed two strong interests early on — in art and in Native American culture. “By the time I was in college, I became very comfortable in the Native American world. I enjoyed the sensibilities of that world,” she says. After graduating with an art education degree — which led to a 21-year career in teaching — Frederick became very close to the family of Baldwin Parker, one of the grandsons of Comanche chief Quanah Parker. At the time she was doing research on chief Quanah with the hope of writing a book, but discovered that Vincent Parker, a great-grandson, had already accumulated a lot of information toward the same goal. They became friends but ultimately no book on Quanah materialized as the young man died, and the Parker family refused to do anything further with the accumulated data. She did paint a portrait of the famous Comanche, however,

and prints of it can be purchased through her website.

Eventually, Frederick, who had become quite knowledgeable about Indian art, received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to document traditional Indian painting in Oklahoma, and a year later published the biography of well-known Kiowa artist T.C. Cannon, one of the first Indian contemporary painters. She also published articles on Indian art in several magazines.

Somewhere along the line, however, Frederick realized that she wasn’t happy to be just someone who writes about others. If she was to become an artist, it was time to focus on her own artistic ideas. It didn’t help that her marriage was not exactly going well either. She turned to experimenting with mobiles in media such as glass and metal, while teaching to pay the bills. Today, her fascination with the Native American culture is sometimes reflected in her artwork.

After moving to San Antonio in 1986, Frederick integrated herself into the art community by attending openings and meeting a lot of people: “I first got into photography by taking pictures of artists and events, parties, openings, babies, funerals. I was always there with my camera. Then I began to realize that this camera business was fun. So I started taking pictures that I could play with by modifying their surfaces. They were just too flat, and I had to do something with them.”

Frederick made a name for herself here by first exhibiting her documentary photos in a number of places in town, but as her art became more daring, doors started opening to her art photography as well. She was included in shows at the Southwest School of Art, Blue Star, the Carver and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. In fact, it was the show at the Carver in 2009 that attracted McIntyre’s attention and earned her recognition as Artist of the Month by the Office of Cultural Affairs. Included were photo composites, mixed media conceptual pieces and installations that incorporated photography in truly unusual ways.

“I enjoy all of it,” she says. “Just the idea of coming up with something new is fun. I always try to push further with each project to find a new way to say something. I think you should say something with your art.”



# In Full Swing

Fotoseptiembre opens the season with multiple exhibits

By JASMINA WELLINGHOFF



Fotoseptiembre: Jennifer Shaw

AT LEFT: Two images from *Fairy Tales* and *Hurricane Story* for Fotoseptiembre at the Mexican Cultural Institute. BELOW: Zeus, a remotely operated vehicle for exploring the ocean deep. See Zeus's robotic arm in *Shipwreck! Pirates & Treasures* at the Witte Museum.

After the relative summer lull, the arts and entertainment scene roars back into full swing in the fall.

## ANNUAL EVENTS

The biggest event in September is the Fotoseptiembre USA Festival founded 16 years ago by artists/producers Michael Mehl and Ann Kinzer. It's a huge, city-wide showcase of photography, from documentary and narrative to all sorts of experimental explorations of the medium and even photo-based multimedia installations. Of special interest this year is a group of exhibits jointly sponsored by San Antonio's Office of Cultural Affairs and the Taipei Cultural Center featuring both traditional and contemporary Taiwanese artists. The venues taking part are the San Antonio Museum of Art, the City of San Antonio International Center and, most prominently, the Mexican Cultural Institute, which will host several shows curated by Mehl himself.

Another noteworthy development is the participation of many women photographers, both local and international. The exhibit *Look-She* consists entirely of women's work, for instance. An exploration of self-image, it includes pieces by Elise Boularan (France), Dita Kubin (Canada), Malin Vulcano (Sweden) and Natahlie Daoust (Canada/Germany), whom San Antonians have gotten to know from previous years. In a solo show, New Orleans-based Jennifer Shaw is presenting *Hurricane Story*, which Mehl described as "a unique visual account of the ordeal her family went through because of Katrina."

San Antonio women are well represented as well. Besides Joan Frederick, who is the ArtBeat subject in this issue and whose work is on view at Bihl Haus Arts, several other galleries feature women artists, including Carla Veliz, Debra Sugerman, Annette Landry, Elva Salinas and Sonja Heldt Harris. For a complete listing of events, go to [www.fotoseptiembreusa.com](http://www.fotoseptiembreusa.com).

On the music front, mid-September is traditionally the time for the Jazz'SAlive Festival to be held this year Sept. 24-25 in Travis Park ([www.saparksfoundation.org](http://www.saparksfoundation.org)), while in mid-October you can enjoy the International Accordion Festival in La Villita ([www.internationalaccordionfestival.org](http://www.internationalaccordionfestival.org)). Both events are high caliber and absolutely free.



Witte Odyssey

Yet another big annual happening in this period (Oct. 23) is the Alamo Theater Arts Council Globe Awards Show at the Charlene McCombs Empire Theater. It's our version of the Tonys, with excerpts from nominated productions, food and glamour galore.

## AROUND TOWN

The venerable Witte Museum always has something exciting up its sleeve, and this period is no exception. Opening Oct. 1 is *Shipwreck! Pirates & Treasures* that will feature more than 500 artifacts recovered from various famous shipwrecks around the world, plus hands-on interactive pirate-themed experiences and fun computer games. Visitors will be able to see and operate some replicas of tools that are used in deep sea recovery. The Witte is also celebrating its 85th anniversary this year, but more about that in the November/December issue.

Theaters across San Antonio are gearing up for their 2011-12 lineups. The Cadillac Broadway in San Antonio season at the Majestic Theater starts with *Mary Poppins* (Sept. 29-Oct.9) and continues with the beloved classic *Fiddler on the Roof* (Dec. 6-11) and the powerful *Les Miserables* (Jan. 3-8). The local premiere of *Billy Elliot The Musical*, the Blue Man Group and *La Cage Aux Folles* will follow later in 2012.

The Classic Theater and the Vexler have announced interesting seasons too, with the latter also leaning toward modern classics this time around. Highlights at the former include *The House of Bernarda Alba*