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Photo by Fran Reisner

The Chisel and the Lens

By Cynthia Howe

ALTHOUGH PHOTOGRAPHY was not available to Michelangelo, the spirit of what defines art was. Today's artist can utilize their camera similarly to Michelangelo's chisel: they chisel out the heart and soul of an object, set against a moment, which in turn becomes enduring.

Fran Reisner has an eye for the inner angel. Her work includes a number of pieces that define that elusive quality of visual emotion. One piece that comes to mind is a picture in sepia tones of an old monastery set upon rolling hills in the heart of Italy. The trees capture light, and create an intricate lace against ancient stone. The clouds appear to continue in motion. Ms. Reisner has successfully captured the essence of timelessness in this piece, and the affect is moving and quite breathtaking.

Ms. Reisner began working with photography in her early 20s. She followed her passion and graduated from Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, California. Soon afterward she launched

her career in commercial photography. After moving to Frisco, she focused her attention on parenting and portraits. She has an ideal studio in which to create and expand her calling.

"When I do someone's portrait I ask them a variety of questions to help define the individual's personality. I then develop a setting that reflects that person's story," Ms. Reisner explains. It is that storytelling quality that her clients have come to treasure. They are similar in nature to Diego Valasquez' *Maids of Honor*, where the intended objects are set in an every day moment.

In one portrait, Ms. Reisner sets a toddler cross-legged on the floor in front of an aged door. Next to him sits his worn little teddy, and the young, barefooted boy is reading from his favorite childhood book. The effect is endearing to the viewer, and a cherished treasure to the boy's family. Ms. Reisner's gift to capture these timeless visual treasures continues to be in demand throughout

the Dallas metroplex. However, growing in popularity is her work beyond portrait photography, in still life.

Ms. Reisner recently returned from a photographic pilgrimage to Italy where she captured the beauty and personality of such places as Tuscany and Venice. The textures and colors come to life in her work, as well as the grace and beauty found within the simplest forms. Although much of her work remains raw in nature, she also uses a variety of lenses and techniques to enhance and modify the overall effect of her pieces.

Ms. Reisner has modified one of her cameras to take all photos in infrared, from which she can then develop a multitude of effects. One piece she processed from the modified camera depicts a number of covered boats moored along a home-lined river. The boat coverings appear blue, while the balance of the photo is depicted in gray tones. The treatment enhances the coverings, and evokes thoughts of the close of the day, the putting to bed



Flea Market Window by Julie Pici (above); *Frostbite* by DeAnna Jones (right)



of activity and work: all is quiet and right with the world. It's beautiful.

Ms. Reisner's growing collection of still life is exquisite. Whether they were taken in Italy, San Miguel or Savannah, they speak to the viewer. While ordinary photos speak to the heart, photography in art form speaks to the soul. Ms. Reisner admits that today the public has a vast array of materials and equipment that can open a whole new door to them, inviting them in to explore their passions with fantastic results. However, photography, and art as photography, differ.

Throughout the classical era, when Michelangelo was chiseling out David, the world saw art as a form of worship to God. Art and worship went hand-in-hand. True art spoke on an individual level to the soul of the viewer, similarly to how God speaks to each of us in very individual ways. In a postmodern worldview, according to the Random House Dictionary, art is defined as "The quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance." However, each one personally defines what art is.

Julie Pici has spent the last year and a half re-discovering herself through her art. Although most of her work in the past was done in front of the camera, she is delighting herself behind the camera. She held the title of Mrs. North Texas in 2006, having dedicated herself to the pageant, not for glory sake, but to create a platform for her dedication to the Visual

Arts Guild of Frisco (VAGF).

After moving to Frisco, her husband encouraged her to dedicate herself anew. She joined the VAGF and has thoroughly enjoyed the encouragement and support she has received from other artists. "I started shooting pictures when I was in high school. I wanted to shoot black and white pictures. I thought capturing moments in time – in a moody sense – was a good way to go," Ms. Pici states.

Michelangelo's Angel would be chiseled anew if captured by Ms. Pici's camera. Her Angel piece beautifully captures an angel statue she found in the hill country of Fredericksburg. It is set in gray tones, and the age and quality reflect the mood of the angel itself. "I like still life. I move around the object, and get it just the way I want it to convey the mood I'm in," Ms. Pici explains.

Another captivating piece is *Flea Market Window*. The tones and patterns created within the piece draw your eye to a myriad of details. It perfectly represents the "moodiness" desired by the artist.

Ms. Pici enjoys focusing on obscure objects that, when focused close-up, appear to be much different than what they are. "I have an old, wire whisk that I took a number of pictures of. One of my friends just loved the results, but couldn't believe it was just an old, wire whisk." To Ms. Pici, what makes a photo art is the emotion the piece evokes, a sense or feel of something beyond the piece itself.

Another new artist is DeAnna Jones. While her missionary family boasts a number of artists, Ms. Jones didn't find her niche until her husband encouraged her to expand her hobby. "It's still a hobby to me. My greatest joy is when I can use my talents as a gift for friends or loved ones," Ms. Jones modestly states. Her eye for color and tone is remarkable. Her piece entitled *Frostbite* captures beautifully the change of seasons marked by the color of a red fall leaf set against white snow.

"Photography is a passion. I am a writer, a poet, a mother of two beautiful boys, a wife to a good man. I feel blessed to create." Ms. Jones enjoys doing portraits, but her passion is communicated best through her still life photography. Water drops on leaves, petals rediscovered through up-close angles, Ms. Jones has an eye for bringing out the extraordinary in the ordinary.

The artist behind the lens captures the treasures of our age. They chisel out the often unappreciated beauty of life, as it is, or could be, or perhaps was, with the seasonings of emotions that vary as greatly as the sands of time itself. Frisco is blessed to have such treasured artists in our midst who speak to us with grace and beauty.

Cynthia Howe is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.