

Woman

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The Middletown Press | B10 | Monday, November 10, 2003

Common threads that bind us

Sculptor Connie Pfeiffer addresses birth and death; issues that transcend time and space

By ALICE C. STELZER

Middletown Press Correspondent

MIDDLETOWN - As a sculptor, Connie Pfeiffer of Chester has about as unpredictable a style as you can find. Gallery owner Renana Magee says this trait is rarely found in such an artist.

"What makes her interesting as an artist is that she works in such varied sizes," says Magee, owner of Renana Gallery on Main Street. "Connie has a wide range of scale as a sculptor. Typically, sculptors produce either big or small sculptures, but Connie does both and lots in between. She has huge, 10-foot-high pieces hanging from the ceiling. Then she has tiny rings.

Still, the artist's work is unmistakable.

"She does everything, but you can always tell it's a Pfeiffer."

Through Dec. 24, you can see the nature-oriented sculptures of Pfeiffer at the gallery, 648 Main St.

Pfeiffer describes her sculptures. "The works offer a visual interpretation of our understanding of life in the context of everyday situations - birth, rebirth or death - These are a common thread that bonds us."

Rather than have her art make a definite statement, Pfeiffer builds in doubt to allow the viewer to attach a meaningfulness that is personal. "The way I use the materials in my pieces, I create ambiguity, so it allows a larger audience to relate or ask questions about them," says Pfeiffer.

"I have a great appreciation for nature. I've been connected with nature my whole life. Through my art, I'm providing a visual language for people to relate to - not just about nature itself, but our connectedness to the earth, each other, and the environment.

"Through my art, I try to address the common thread of people - meanings that transcend time and place. It's not just about us, but old ideas of appreciating nature and each other."

Pfeiffer completed her master's degree from one of the most respected, career-oriented and professional educational institutions in the world, Rochester Institute of Technology, in 1995. In her career, Pfeiffer has been very busy teaching and creating sculptures. She has been an instructor at the Creative Arts Workshop in New



Tom Warren/The Middletown Press

Connie Pfeiffer, whose studio is in Chester, is shown with her outdoor sculpture "Protectress VI" made of copper, steel, wire, acrylic and patina at the Renana Gallery in Middletown.

Haven for the last five years, teaching the jewelry metals program.

CAW is a nonprofit arts organization offering classes for painting, sculpting, pottery, and bookbinding, among others.

Last March, Pfeiffer was featured in an exhibit at CAW, "Inventing Nature," along with painter Paula Gabriel. "It's an amazing facility. I have been

teaching there for five years," said Pfeiffer.

She has also been teaching at the Wesleyan Potters for the last few years.

Other places she has exhibited include a show in Southport; a wellness facility, Beyond Care; and City Gallery, a co-operative in New Haven. For the last six years, her studio has been in Chester.

Renana Gallery owner Renana Magee was impressed with Pfeiffer and her work from the first time she met her.

"I met Connie when she was one of four Wesleyan potters who brought their stuff to show and sell in a trunk show. Connie brought jewelry and sculptures. I loved her stuff, so we pretty much booked the show right then.

"What makes her interesting as an artist is that she works in such varied sizes. Connie has a wide range of scale as a sculptor. Typically, sculptors produce either big or small sculptures, but Connie does both and lots in between. She has huge, 10-foot-high pieces hanging from the ceiling. Then she has tiny rings.

"She does everything but you can always tell it's a Pfeiffer," said Magee.

Some of sculptures you can expect to view during this exhibition include the "Protectress," which is comprised of leather, copper, paper, wood, and acrylic. The "Earth/Roots" sculpture is made of paper, acrylic, wire, and pine needles.

Pfeiffer has created extensively with copper. Two pieces in this show using copper are "Healing Souls," which also includes silver, paper, acrylic, and patina; and "Spirit of Linda III," which, in addition to the copper, is comprised of paper, wood, and acrylic.

As an artist, Pfeiffer is constantly evolving. "My newest works are incorporating glass and stone a lot. I'm also working on an installation at City Gallery in collaboration with another artist, Sadie Bridger, which require building an environment in the entire gallery. I have never collaborated with anyone before, so it will be a new experience and I'm looking forward to it."

The Renana Gallery, which has been a showcase for Connecticut artists since its opening in October last year, is leaving the artists' cooperative building at 648 Main St., at the end of the year. Magee has announced that Renana Gallery has given 90 days notice that it will no longer be at this location.

Since its opening, the gallery has been part of 10-member North End Artists Cooperative. "The bottom line is I want to just do the gallery. I don't want all the other stuff that involved with the cooperative. I'm trying to find a building I can buy," said Magee.

She hopes to have secured another site for the gallery before the first of the year, but makes it very clear that her leaving will not endanger the cooperative that will continue at that address.

Gallery hours are: Tuesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. For information, call 344-1194.