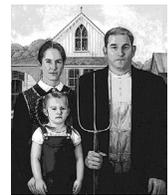


Art Adventure I Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski



Da Da in Da Region

There is a saying that

“One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” That is a motto by which the St. John artist Richard DePirro has lived by all of his life.

DePirro isn’t your run-of-the-mill garbage picker. DePirro has an undergraduate and a master’s degree in art education with an impressive resume of teaching secondary art education for just under 40

years. That makes his garbage, well, different.

Growing up in “Da Region,” raised by an Italian father, a stern Dutch mother, and six brothers made Richard DePirro a resourceful kid. Though his family was never poor, Richard and his brothers made the best of their hand-me-downs, used their imaginations and made the best of what they did have.

DePirro remembers as a way to pass the time while they were kids, he and his brothers would go explor-

ing and pick through garbage to see if there was anything worth salvaging to play with.

This would plant the seed of his life-long passion for collecting objects.

DePirro explains, “It has always been the thrill of the hunt, or never knowing what you might find, which made rummaging through garbage an enjoyable past time.”

Most scavengers nowadays are looking for something they can use, repair, or make functional because

of their economic shortcomings.

Not DePirro. He chooses his garbage based on its uniqueness or whether it is worthy enough to turn into art. He usually chooses old scraps of steel, tools, shovels, rakes, nuts, bolts and just about anything that can be welded together or assembled to make art. He usually passes up plastic or paper favoring heavy metal materials.

His creative process is not always a straight path; it’s more of a winding road with lots of speed bumps and detours in between.

Along with his passion for collecting discarded material and found objects, DePirro has had a life-long fascination with African masks. Inspired by African art much like Picasso and the early Cubists, DePirro’s constructed masks have a post-modern, primitive beauty about them. Although constructed of old bolts, wrenches, and scraps of steel, his gritty rusty masks have the same qualities as the African masks made centuries ago.

Most artists sketch ideas and execute that idea by either chipping away on a block of limestone or molding a piece of clay into a figure. Not Richard. He finds working with found objects more challenging. He can come up with a myriad of ideas based on piece of scrap.

Richard has always liked the principles of the “Da Da” movement. The Da Daist movement began in Zurich and flourished

between the years of 1916-1920.

This movement was essentially an anti-artist artists movement. If art was to represent only the beautiful, then Da Da art was to be raw and grotesque. If art was to have deep meaning, then DaDa was to be light, absurd, or whimsical. If art was to be only for the wealthy and privileged classes, then Da Da was to be for the common or working man.

Still, it takes a unique person to have the guts to go through filthy garbage and lift heavy objects from the trash to take home and store at the house for future works of art. This process isn’t for the mild and the meek.

DePirro, a manly artist to say the least, played football all the years he went to college and worked his summers in the steel mills to pay for school. I asked his wife, Karen DePirro, herself a fine artist with a BFA in painting, what do you think of his collecting?

She answered, “He’s an artist, that is what he does.”

He would meet his intelligent, beautiful, blonde wife after his post graduate work while teaching at the same school. They would have two children, one of whom is a professional



artist: stay tuned!

Richard DePirro continues to test the boundaries of what defines art.

He’s won numerous local, regional and national awards, and most recently, has been selected to exhibit in an upcoming tri-state Regional Juried Art Exhibition. The show opens Jan. 27 and runs through March 25, with an opening reception on Jan. 27 from 7-9 p.m.

The event is free and open to the public. For questions about the show you can either call Richard DePirro 219-365-4667 or visit www.lubeznikcenter.org or call 219-874-4900.

When I asked Richard DePirro what he remembers as a kid, he remarked that he and his father went to a Five and Dime store which had lots of toys for boys and girls all divided up into sections. He saw a toy he wanted very badly and asked his father if he would buy it for him. His father asked him, “Can you eat it?” Richard said “No.”

“Well, there’s your answer.”

When I asked Richard DePirro how to define his art he said, “You can’t eat it.”

■Want to see more of Richard or his artist wife or artist son? Visit www.richarddepirro.com or his wife www.karendepirro.com or son www.nickdepirro.com

■Email your comments to samowner@sbcglobal.net



HEALTHY NOTES

Brought to you by Saint Anthony

Saint Anthony Medical Center Receives National Award for Fighting Cancer

Saint Anthony Medical Center’s proactive stance against the cancer fight has recently been recognized by the American Cancer Society. The hospital has earned the Five Star Community Investor in the fight against cancer through the ACS’s Work Place Solutions program.

The Five Star Community Investor Award is presented to hospitals that are active in fighting cancer on multiple fronts through programs and services of the American Cancer Society.

“Saint Anthony Medical Center is an innovative leader in the fight against cancer,” said Maura Rowley, Quality of Life Director, Northwest Indiana Area Service Center. “By partnering with the American Cancer Society, Saint Anthony is being recognized for improving the quality of life for the cancer patient, families and the community.”

“Saint Anthony Medical Center is honored to receive such recognition from the American Cancer Society,” said Rebecca Grove, RN, MBA Manager of the Burrell Cancer Institute and the Breast Care Center at Saint Anthony.

To qualify for Five Star honors, hospitals must participate in at least five areas of the Society’s mission. As a Five Star Community Investor, Saint Anthony Medical Center participates in the following ACS initiatives:

Breast Cancer Cervical Program: Saint Anthony Medical Center refers women to the Indiana Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program which offers free to low-cost breast and cervical screenings for eligible women.

Cancer Committee: Local American Cancer Society staff participate in the hospitals’ cancer committee, educating the committee about available resources, programs and services through ACS and the community.

Cancer Screenings: Saint Anthony Medical Center offers opportunities for cancer prevention through the detection and removal of pre-cancers through Community Cancer Screenings.

Cancer Survivors: Saint Anthony Medical Center partners with ACS to celebrate survivorship through Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and Relay for Life events.

Tobacco Cessation: Saint Anthony Medical Center participates in the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout each November.

To learn more about the Burrell Cancer Institute’s Cancer Screening Clinic, call 219.757.6407.



To locate a physician near you, call the Physician Referral Line at 219.757.6000.