

Warren County Arts Council

FEATURED ARTIST

David and Joanne Kelch: Framed by Nature

By Janet Irvin

Motivated by their desire to create as well as by the beauty of the natural world, David and Joanne Kelch have framed an artistic life around these two tenets. David, a graduate of the Rochester Institute of Technology School of Photographic Arts and Sciences, applies his skill in digital photography to the creation of conservation-quality prints of wildlife in its natural habitat. Joanne, who has a background in fabric arts that includes art, quilting and dollmaking, uses these skills to produce kaleidoscopic Mandala images based on David's photos. Married for 39 years, the Kelches have developed their art out of their individual interests and the fortuitous events of their life.



"Our Lady of Oregonia"

David decided to become an imaging scientist after his freshman year at Rochester. His early scientific work included working on several Apollo missions and developing a number of patents in the conventional photography field. Intrigued by the possibilities of digital imaging systems, David's scientific career has followed that path since the early 1970s. "But he always had an artistic component," Joanne says. In 2004 David told her he wanted to invest in a digital camera. Joanne asked the price and agreed that it was a reasonable purchase. "Then the lenses started arriving," she adds with a laugh.

When a friend looked at the photographs and suggested that others might want to purchase them, David's long-time passion for photography found a new direction. David's subjects are mostly birds with occasional other wildlife and landscapes serving as inspiration. Joanne cites his photograph of a cardinal, "Our Lady of Oregonia," as one of her favorites since the lighting for the piece is "the kind only Mother Nature can provide."

Joanne's art is a natural outgrowth of her early interest in creating something beautiful. She began by making simple hand puppets, then helped her sister do wallpapering. "But I always did needlework," Joanne says. When the quilting bug bit, she moved in that direction, but she had a desire to put David's photographs on fabric. Joanne was certain, however, that she didn't want to simply transfer the straight pictures. "I applied the same principles used in kaleidoscopic quilting to his photographs and then to mine. The neat part about it is I can take one of my own photos and multiply it and it's amazing what patterns emerge." With increased public interest in the concept of Mandala, Joanne's creations have acquired a spiritual quality she didn't anticipate when she began creating them.



"Wake Robins"



"Wake Robins Mandala"

Much of David's work is photographed in rural Warren County , especially along the Little Miami River, an area David refers to as "God's country." Asked to name a favorite photographer, he mentions Ansel Adams, Josef Karsh and Dorothea Lange, all for their skill with composition and lighting. As for wildlife, "I'm not going to go there...too many good ones to choose from," David says. Joanne names David as her favorite photographer, but "for touchy feely, I love Anne Geddes for her gift of creating the awe factor." Both David and Joanne cite the joy that customers express about their art as a factor in their own enjoyment of creating their works.

The Kelches have been involved in the Warren County Festival of the Arts since 2006, and David's work received Best-Of-Show in 2006 and 2007. Although a schedule conflict prevents them from participating this year, they hope to return in 2010. Pricing for their artwork ranges from \$25 to \$1000 dollars. "Our philosophy," Joanne says, "is pretty simple. Art makes one feel good and producing it is even better. For us, it is such an honor to know people want to have our work in their homes."

To view examples of their art or to contact David and Joanne, visit www.wrenworks.com, or send an email to wrenworks@earthlink.net. The Kelches can also be reached at WrenWorks, POB 826, Waynesville , OH 45068 . Their art is also exhibited at *Picture This...* in Lebanon , and *Clear Creek Furniture* west of Waynesville.

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