

HINT OF SPRING



DEB
RUNKLE



CHUCK
ISENHART



GERALD
PODRAZA

JANUARY 3-27, 2023

BISIGNANO ART GALLERY
HERITAGE CENTER UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE

Hint of Spring Essay

Alan Garfield, Director Bisignano Art Gallery

As I write this essay, the temperature is -5 degrees below 0. (I'm just talking temperature; windchill of course is much worse.) For the length of this exhibit, it will probably not stay as cold, but I can assume ice, slush and snow for January. I'm not a soothsayer; I just live in the midwest and I know what to expect.

Rarely is art about expectations, though. The best of it usually defies preconceived expectations. Most folks like to define art as something which exemplifies beauty and while I wouldn't disagree, I think it is also as much about surprise. These three artists are clearly all about surprise in detail, color and focus. They seem to leave little to chance. We can't escape their vision nor these reverently captured images.

They require us to examine them in detail whether we want to or not. They speak to us as nature and maybe more. These works seem almost religious in their humble message of love in God's world. They remind me of Psalm 96 - "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy." Perhaps you don't feel this way. I get it. But I would be surprised if the photographers disagreed with me.

Would our reactions to these fine photographs by Dubuque area artists Chuck Isenhart, Gerald Podraza and Debra Runkle be the same if it was 98 degrees outside with our lawns of brown, crispy grass? I think so. Their reverence for nature, for contrasts, and for figure/ground relationships seem timeless. But don't get me wrong. I really appreciate them even more with that frigid layer of white outside.

We hope you enjoy our toasty warm gallery exhibition.



Chuck Isenhart. Butterfly.



Chuck Isenhart. Little Fuzzy Head Duck.



Chuck Isenhart. Frog Eyes.



Chuck Isenhart. Owl Face.



Gerald Podraza. Stagecoach Trail.



Gerald Podraza. Skeleton Head.



Gerald Podraza. Egnis Droid #62.



Gerald Podraza. Makin It With Blue Eyes



Debra Runkle. Painters World of Colors.



Debra Runkle. Bringing Home Food.



Debra Runkle. Ray on Skipping Droplets.



Debra Runkle. Tulip.

Chuck Isenhardt: Artist's Statement

I am a self-trained photographer who did his own work from A to Z as a newspaper reporter and freelance writer early in my working career, back in the days before digital. For many years that interest languished. However, I started to routinely take my camera with me when I took refuge in nature, as many people did, during the pandemic. I found myself focusing on the diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna I encountered on my adventures, including how I observed people interacting with nature.

I especially enjoy unexpected encounters with birds, butterflies, insects, mushrooms, unusual flowers, gnarly trees, gorgeous sunsets, rarely seen animals or patterns in nature that make good screen savers. I think I have a natural eye for composition but admit that I am still a novice at working the settings on my cameras and lenses. Many times I don't realize what I have until I download the photos to my computer, and often I feel lucky to get one or two keepers out of 100 clicks.

I am just beginning to explore the various ways I can manifest these results with public and private audiences. This exhibit is one of my first forays, and I appreciate Prof. Garfield's invitation. For the most part, I am satisfied with lightly editing my photos and sharing them virtually on social media. With the help of professionals, such as members of the Dubuque Camera Club -- who have more tools for and experience in post-production -- maybe you will see more of what I do primarily for personal enjoyment as "photographic works" in the future.

Gerald Podraza: Artist's Statement

Vintage farm buildings cry out for restoration while at the same time, urban voices through expression of freight car graffiti scream for recognition. Overlay of rural and urban voices creates a visual tension simultaneously harmonious and discordant. Voices drive a counterpoint while seeking to establish a dialogue.

Separate sets of documentary photographs were harvested. Images were captured at freight yards and in isolated rural areas within the Tri-State, Northeast Iowa, Southwest Wisconsin, and Northwest Illinois. This process culminated in experimentally pairing and imbedding visuals to establish mood, ethnographic message, and voice. Final works were labeled with bluesy sounding names.

Debra Runkle: Artist's Statement

In photography I discovered a passion that I had not considered before. This display I have created allows me to express myself and communicate with others through photography. That could be a bud, a drop of pollen, a petal, color palette, the pistils, the geometry that the beholder sees. I believe the vision field holds deep beauty.

I am able to take my love of planting a flower bed to a level that is able to be enjoyed by others. It is beyond interpretation what one views when walking by a garden, a weed, a park, receiving a bouquet. In viewing a photo an individual will relate to the disciplines of art, science, music or simply the world of imagination.

Looking at the "photographs" one can see that many of my titles reflect science and art.