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Bert Monroy's Digital Art on Display at SMC's Hearst Gallery Paintings Created with Today's Technology

By Andrea A. Firth



Damen by Bert Monroy Photos courtesy of Hearst Gallery

As you enter the Bert Monroy Exhibit at the Hearst Gallery you feel as though you are walking directly onto the platform of the Damen Street elevated train stop on Chicago's northside. A few steps further into the Gallery you realize that you are looking at a five-foot by 14-foot hyper-realistic image of the deserted rail station, and you begin to question whether it is a photograph or a painting. Damen, the largest work in artist Monroy's collection, is comprised of 15,000 digital layers and serves an elegant example of the patience required to create his photo-realistic paintings.

Dubbed Mr. PixelPaint, Monroy is the preeminent pioneer of digital art. Part artist and part technician, Monroy is the master of the point and click. As Monroy creates, his canvas is housed in a Macintosh computer and displayed on two large-screen monitors. His brushes and paint are drawn from the software programs Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator.

Monroy ventured into digital art while working at his own advertising agency in New York back in 1984. His first Macintosh computer, which is also on display at the exhibit, boasts a 4-inch by 6-inch screen in a 12-inch by 18-inch box complimented by a keyboard that is a technological one-step beyond the keys of a typewriter-an antiquity of the late 20st century. Monroy embraced computer technology as an artistic medium from outset upgrading the hardware and software as each new version was released. He achieved master status and went on to teach the art of digital art to literally millions of students around the world.

At the heart of Monroy's work is his love of painting. Exhibit-goers will be fascinated by his portrayal of light in the shadows created by a deck chair and in the reflections found on signs and saltshaker caps and in mirrors and puddles. Locals will also be delighted to see many familiar scenes of Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and Marin County.

What is most exciting about the Monroy Exhibit is the video that explains how it is done. The source of his inspiration and the method of his execution is not a secret for the supernaturally and artistically inclined. Monroy, as cool as his Apple roots, leads the viewer through his artistic journey, taking a clear and understandable path for those with only a moderate amount of computer knowledge. Be sure to watch long enough to see him create a flock of birds that seem to fly off the screen and the leaves on a tree identical to the one in your own

backyard. Or make plans to drop into see the real Monroy as he shares his digital art techniques at the upcoming digital media demonstration.

Bert Monroy's Exhibit of works, entitled A Digital Artist Paints with Light, will be displayed at the Hearst Gallery on the campus of Saint Mary's College in Moraga through April 5th. The Digital Media Demonstration with the artist will be held on March 19th from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Soda Center followed by a half hour Exhibit Tour. With questions, contact the Hearst Gallery (925) 631-4379, www.hearstgallery.org.



Bert Monroy Photo provided



Breakfast in Tiburon by Bert Monroy

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