

Artist reaches out to broadest audience

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CORRESPONDENT

Andre Rochester's art is currently on display in the gallery at Paris in Plantsville. The Hartford native's art is designed to reach as many people as possible by using vibrant colors to draw the attention of the viewer and then smaller subtleties to keep their attention.

"Negative or positive, a work of art is unsuccessful when nobody can say anything about it," said Rochester in an email interview.

Rochester could easily focus his attention on the dry media such as graphite, charcoal or pastels. These are things that he knows he is good at. However, he is constantly pushing himself into areas where he is not as comfortable such as painting.

"I've been working on a portrait series and making a lot of conceptual paintings for a while now because I want to develop more as a painter."

The drive that Rochester possesses as an artist and displays in Plantsville is directly influenced by his childhood. At the age of 10, his mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. At that point Rochester said, "He had to grow up fast."

From the age of 10 to 16, Rochester cared for his mother. Then when he was 16, his mother passed away from complications with the disease.

"During this hard time in my life, I was often alone and didn't have too many people I could talk to, so I started to draw."

Rochester used to draw "silly pictures" like any typical young kid, but after the loss of his mother, art became his only outlet. The artistic medium offered him a way to express himself and his feelings over his mother's battle with the disease.

Soon Rochester had still lifes and drawings of objects set up in his room. The budding passion that first developed as an outlet soon became something he was getting praise in from projects in art classes in high school. Thus, a career was born.

"Art, for me, is a way to



freely express myself. I do pieces as they come to me rather than try to plan an exact project; it never turns out to be what I planned anyway."

Instead of focusing on one specific type of art, Rochester prefers to have a broad background in pieces that are mixed media. Currently, he is working on a triptych or three-part piece that incorporates vinyl letters that builds texture in the piece.

Rochester likes to experiment with many genres and not be defined by any. He has a broad range of influences "from Salvador Dali to Romare Bearden, Basquiat, Picasso, Kandinsky, and even Van Gogh to name a few."

The unique style that Rochester has developed for himself is clearly a combination of childhood experiences and artistic influences. However, trying to pinpoint exactly what genre Rochester creates in is something he leaves purposefully vague.

"I don't want my work to be classified either, I just want it to be enjoyed for what it is. I enjoy watching how people react to my work because I like to see how an image can affect the viewer's emotion."

Rochester is constantly exploring new art forms, including his recent collaboration with Hartford-born motivational speaker and

author Dana Rondel on the children's book "The Sunflower and Rose." Rochester illustrated this book.

There is an interesting dynamic between the viewer and the creator that Rochester seems to be exploring in his many projects regardless of classification. After all, art is such a subjective medium, that no two people can possibly have the same reaction to a piece of art. Rochester embraces this notion with every new step he takes in exploring the artist he is and the artist he will become.

For information on Rochester's art, please visit www.rochesterfineart.com.

Paris in Plantsville is at 15 West Main St., Plantsville. It is open Tuesday to Friday 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 to 11 p.m. and Sunday, 12 to 4 p.m.



Above, and at right, examples of the artwork of Andre Robertson. Robertson is currently exhibiting at Paris in Plantsville in Plantsville.

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