



CHRISTINE KIROUAC

New exhibit illuminates often-overlooked street newspaper hawkers

Eye on 'Papermen'

BY KEN KEUFFEL
Winston-Salem Journal

When Christine Kirouac, a Canadian artist, moved here in 2008, she felt a need to attach herself more deeply to her new home.

"I was trying to figure out what my place is here," she said. "I was searching for some way to belong."

One way she did that was by driving around the city. Each time she did, she kept coming across men who were selling copies of the Winston-Salem Journal on medians and street corners.

Could these people give her the sense of community that she was craving? And if a connection could be made, could she channel that through her art in ways that revealed sides of the newspaper hawkers that motorists seldom see?

Kirouac describes herself as tenacious and having an ability to open up to strangers. Before long, she was pulling over, introducing herself and striking up conversations with "these predominantly African-American guys who are not connected to me in any way, shape or form." She also started photographing the hawkers for an exhibition called "Papermen: Images of Christine Kirouac," which will open tonight at the Delta Arts Center.

Kenny-Ray Parks, one of the hawkers photographed by Kirouac, recalls her bringing "so much energy when she approached."

"She seemed enthused about it — which made me enthused," Parks said. "I think everybody liked her approach ... She got everybody at a certain level. I admire her."

Dianne Caesar is the exec-



DAVID ROUFE/JOURNAL

Christine Kirouac photographed newspaper hawkers for an exhibition showing through June 30 at the Delta Arts Center. "These guys not only tie the city together geographically, they're also a reminder to connect with another human being once in a while," Kirouac says.

utive director of Delta Fine Arts Inc., which is presenting "Papermen." Caesar pointed out that we look at the hawkers all the time.

"But we don't really see them," she said. "With this process of what Christine has done, it gives (us) a new view of them."

Just what that view is will vary from viewer to viewer. But Ki-

rouac clearly believes that her images will illuminate some larger truths.

"We can find great beauty and dignity and approachability and vulnerability and humanity in the most unexpected places — if you allow that moment to happen," Kirouac said. "These guys not only tie the city together geographically, they're also a reminder to connect with an-

other human being once in a while, especially when people use so much technology."

Caesar said she hopes that viewers will "find art and beauty in the ordinary."

"These men are part of our communities," she said. "They give us a service. To consider the beauty of what they do is something we don't ordinarily do."

Kirouac stressed that she is not a photographer per se, that she is just as apt to work with video or paint in her work.

"I respond to whatever the project is and then I try to think of what is the best way to bring this to life," she said. "Photos seemed to be something that was speaking to me. I had a

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technical team that was very helpful to me."

The team contributed to an elaborate process in which Kirouac's photos were transferred onto newsprint, photographed again on stacks of newspapers and enlarged on synthetic surfaces hanging in the gallery. A \$2,000 regional artist project grant from the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and

Forsyth County helped finance the project.

"It wasn't enough for me to take a photo," Kirouac said. "I wanted to merge the object of the newspaper with them ... That really did bring more depth and content. They (the hawkers) become part of what they sell."

The hawker program has been around for about 25 years, and between 15 and 30 people are doing it each day except Mondays and Tuesdays and some major holidays. They work, like newspaper carriers, as independent contractors.

As "Papermen" reveals, most hawkers are black males, though white men are in the exhibition's mix. Keith Petty, the journal's circulation director, said that some women have worked as hawkers over the years.

The backgrounds of the hawkers vary. Many have been incarcerated. Others are homeless. Nate McCullough, the program's coordinator, said he's seen retired teachers in the mix and some people from as far away as Chicago.

"You name it; they claim it," McCullough said of the hawkers' backgrounds. "They come from everywhere."

Some hawkers "are down on their luck," said Cindy Hardison, the Jour-

nal's circulation and sales retention manager. But "most of them love what they do. They have their followers."

Petty said that the hawker program gives hawkers "a lot of stability that they wouldn't ordinarily have."

Kirouac said she wanted to make visual art, not a documentary that would spell out details of the hawkers' biographies.

"I've had some people (ask), 'What's this guy's story?' The story's there. It's in his face. You can see his story. That's all

you need to know. I don't need to tell you about his family and his life ... This visual-still image holds all of that for me and lets the viewer ponder and wonder and investigate that for themselves."

Sometimes, the subjects' faces are fully or

partially obscured.

"If you can't see something, it almost makes you more curious," Kirouac said. "It also speaks to the idea of seeing the invisible."

kkeuffel@wsjournal.com
(336) 727-7337



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A stack of bundled newspapers stands in the Delta Arts Center along with Christine Kirouac's exhibit. One of the portraits will be available on the pile for gallery visitors to take with them.

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If you go

What: Winston-Salem Delta Fine Arts Inc. presents "Papermen: Images by Christine Kirouac"

When: Through June 30

Where: Delta Arts Center, 2611 New Walkertown Road

Cost: Free

Information: See www.deltainfinearts.org or call (336) 722-2625

Note: The exhibition's opening reception will be from 6 to 9 p.m. tonight. Kenny-Ray Parks will provide the musical entertainment. Copies of one of the images in "Papermen" will be available for gallery visitors to take during the exhibition's run.

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