

Proceeds from painting go to mission work



Art Gallery of Bancroft volunteer Ada Tinney stands with 'Something Greater is Here' a triptych work in three parts painted by Patrick Stewart, and part of his showing mounted for the month of December. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

Patrick Stewart is a humble man, with deep religious convictions, and a remarkable painter. During the month of December, a selection of his paintings has been on exhibition at the Art Gallery of Bancroft.

Stewart served 11 years with the U.S. Navy as an officer on four combat ships, and in 1987 left naval life.

Shortly afterward, he was inspired by a visit to Madonna House in Combermere where he witnessed resident artists living an existence of humble service, and the 'persistent discipline of doing all things well.'

More than 25 years later, Stewart has been living that life, and applying it to his paintings as a resident of Madonna House himself. Madonna House also has national and international missions, and Stewart has volunteered there too, doing everything from food preparation in inner city soup kitchens, to fixing pipes, mopping floors, even learning how to pump septic tanks. But, he always returned to his painting.

'The money made from the sale of artwork goes to foreign missions outside of Madonna House,' he said. 'I love to paint, I receive great joy when I see others discover beauty in art, and that the proceeds of the sales go to help the poor the world over.'

Residents at the house do a 'writing bee' once a year, writing to small international missions around the world looking for ways that the International Missions Fund can help.

'Recently we sent money to India,' he said. 'The money was sent directly to a parish priest, who has an orphanage in his parish, and a little school.'

Where does his art come from?

'I had a traumatic childhood, and as a little kid I hid inside of myself. I would disappear somewhere inside of my head. Painting gets me out of my head, into my heart. I am always following beauty; it is not conscious, and it is only recently I have tried to put words on it. The mountains, a flower. I understand so much better if I paint them. The depth of a tree, I discover the river, the reflections, a canoe, and the ripples. I love the beauty of nature, the canvas, the paint, and my brush. I watch the process develop itself. Starting with an idea or an image. But what I have discovered is that I have no idea what the end will be.'

Stewart has done some religious painting in the past; in fact, one of a priest praying in a chapel was in the Bancroft exhibit. 'God created all things, and his presence is within what I paint, and within me,' he said.

Currently, Stewart is Madonna House director of training, but that still means a very simple life, with simple needs.

'There are about 150 people living here at the moment, and there are lots of little things to be done. Like farming, cutting firewood, construction, fixing things, cooking and a used bookstore,' he said.

The International Mission Fund has some good news too.

As of press time, one of the paintings in the Bancroft exhibition has sold for \$3,800. This also benefits the local gallery that makes a commission for the sale.

?Our mandate is to bring a variety of themes and artists,? said Barb Allport, president of the Bancroft gallery.

?We always get feedback, good and bad, which shows we are provoking conversations. Some artists will provoke and poke people by what they present, and others are softer: represent a supportive, spiritual, happy place within us.?