



Studies in contrast

Artists' different styles belie family bond

Story by David Lewellen · Photography by Nathan Harrmann

One of Andrea Schloemer's favorite recent paintings is "Delphiniums at Dawn." The bright colors and layers of oil paint are much different than son Andrew Doyle's minimalist artwork.

An art show last fall at Robert Guenther Studio in Milwaukee featured two artists. One worked in brightly colored, lushly detailed oil paint, concentrating on flowers. One drew people with oil pastels, using spare lines and blocks of muted color.

A casual observer would not have expected them to be mother and son.

But Andrea Schloemer and Andrew Doyle share their art as well as their genes, although they took different paths to their joint show.

When Andy was still a preschooler, Schloemer says, "We'd have people over for dinner, and he'd be hanging around, playing and looking at them. Then he'd go upstairs, and he'd come back down and hand the people a picture that looked like them."

Doyle was precocious and kept drawing. "If I had a pencil and a napkin, I was pretty happy as a kid," he says. But his mom didn't start painting until he was grown. She had always been a fan of art, but timid about trying herself. Then, she says, when her mother was dying, "she said to me, 'Do the things you want to do.' I started to explore how to do it, instead of the reasons I couldn't do it."

So she began taking lessons, enrolling first at Cardinal Stritch University. "School teaches technique," she says. "The love of color and imagination is my own. I love flowers, landscapes, being outdoors. I don't like art that's really sad. If you want to get

depressed, turn on the news. I prefer something that's visibly pleasing, comforting."

Looking on the bright side is "one of the biggest similarities in our artwork," her son says. But although Doyle doesn't show or sell pictures of sadness and pain, he draws them. "It's almost therapeutic," he says. "When you're dealing with the subconscious so much, some of those things are going to come out." After a few drawings of "people who look like they've suffered," he'll put them away. "I wouldn't want to send mixed signals."

Mother and son support each other's work, although they're different. "I try to be careful," Doyle says. "I try to be very positive about everything." He's been doing art longer than his mom, but he doesn't lecture. "We both are each other's biggest fans."

Schloemer lives in a spacious house in Fox Point, which she decorated, with her husband, Jim, and their two school-age children, Tom and Tessa. She is an active volunteer with local charities, but her art gives her a new outlet; she also donates paintings to charity auctions.

The joint show with her son helped to raise money for After Breast Cancer Diagnosis, a charity with special meaning for her because the disease claimed her mother.



Unlike his mother, Andrea Schloemer, Andrew Doyle does not rework his paintings. "If it's not right, it's never going to be right," he says.

Family and volunteer work mean that Schloemer has to squeeze in painting time. "Sometimes I go two weeks without getting up to my studio," she says. "But some days, I'll paint all day long."

Doyle, who now lives in Chicago, has a day job in property management, and also plays bass and writes lyrics for a rock band, Not Us. The time that's left over for drawing is very late at night. "I work best from like midnight to 4 a.m.," he says. "Then the next day at work, I get a cup of coffee."

"His work is interesting to me," says Kathleen Lyons, whose Milwaukee gallery represents Doyle, "because he only uses two or three colors, all pastels, and very minimalist. It's very quiet, but yet his women have a lot of integrity." She hopes to sell more of his work in Florida soon. "Milwaukee homes are very heavy, dark, traditional," she says. "But in Florida they use pastels. It's a whole different interior approach."

Schloemer works in oils, laying down layers and layers of paint, sometimes with surprising results. One of her favorite recent paintings, "Delphiniums at Dawn," has a brilliant peachy-pink background that she first intended to paint over, before deciding it was perfect as it was. Or sometimes she'll scrape

paint off, producing a different kind of effect.

"Her work is very upbeat and bright," says Katie Gingrass, a Milwaukee gallery owner who represents Schloemer. "Flowers are her specialty. It's very brilliant color, very well executed."

Most of her pictures are realistic and lushly detailed, but sometimes she tries a more stylized effect. A picture of the trees near her house came out as little more than white dappled trunks against a blue background. "I didn't want to touch it," Schloemer says. "I kind of liked the way it looked."

And sometimes things just don't work out. A canvas swarming with orange koi fish in blue water has been in Schloemer's studio for more than a year as she tries to get it right. "There's way too much orange in here," she says critically. A friend admired it, she says, but "I said I can't even give it to you, because I don't think it's right."

Her son, however, doesn't believe in messing around. "Once it's done, it's done," Doyle says. "Every line has to be 100 percent confident. If it's not right, it's never going to be right. My mom's always horrified" when he tosses aside a flawed picture.

The next joint project for mother and son is a shared show in Florence, Italy, where Schloemer recently spent a year with her husband and younger children. It's set for this coming fall, but there's already a lot to do. "I don't know anything about shipping art yet," Schloemer says. "I'm going to allow a lot of time." ■