

The Columbus Dispatch

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH • | Sunday, January 29, 2017

Mixed mediums

EXHIBITS / MANSFIELD ARTS CENTER

Paris' river bridges radiant in night photos

By Nancy Gilson
For The Columbus Dispatch

MANSFIELD — Thirty-five beautiful bridges that cross the Seine River in Paris can be seen this winter in Ohio.

Eighty-six black-and-white photographs by Gary Zuercher are on view in "The Glow of Paris: The Bridges of Paris at Night" at the Mansfield Art Center.

Zuercher, a Wooster native who now lives in both Paris and Washington, D.C., shot the bridges at night in winter over five years and spent another year researching their history.

His radiant, atmospheric images are accompanied by text panels with background information and anecdotes about the bridges, plus several maps that show the location of all 35.

One of the most beautiful photographs is "Six Bridges," a panoramic view of a half-dozen of the bridges with a glowing Eiffel Tower visible in the background. Zuercher shot the scene from the top of the Hotel de Ville,



"Pont Neuf" shows the 1607 bridge with the Institut de France and the Eiffel Tower in the background.

Paris' City Hall.

The oldest bridge in Paris ironically is named Pont Neuf (new bridge), constructed in 1607.

Pont au Change (1860) was named for the tradition of money-changing that took place on the bridge; Marie Antoinette was imprisoned in the building behind the bridge before she was sent to the guillotine.

The Pont des Arts,

considered by many to be the most romantic bridge in the city, was being weighed down and damaged by the more than 600,000 locks left by couples proclaiming their enduring love. Several years ago, the railings were replaced and the locks discarded.

Zuercher fell in love with Paris after he fell in love with a Parisian woman, now his wife. A former business

entrepreneur and commercial photographer, he developed his long-exposure method of creating gelatin-silver photographic prints when he shot Pont Alexandre III and accidentally overexposed the negatives. He liked the result.

"It was great, luminous," Zuercher said. "Much more than I expected."

He continued to shoot bridges at night and in

At a glance

■ "The Glow of Paris: The Bridges of Paris at Night" continues through Feb. 27 at the Mansfield Art Center, 700 Marion Ave., Mansfield. Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays. Call 419-756-1700 or visit www.mansfieldartcenter.org.

winter, when, he said, Paris "isn't lousy with tourists."

His style is reminiscent of American landscape photographer Ansel Adams, whose work and technique Zuercher has studied. Zuercher maintains darkrooms in Paris (where he develops his film) and Washington (where he prints).

Mansfield Art Center Executive Director George Whitten, a photographer himself who knew of Zuercher and his work, was eager to display the City of Light photos in north central Ohio.

"Black-and-white photography is kind of a lost art these days," Whitten said. "Everything is color now. And to find someone who actually works in a wet dark-room is great."

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