

Plexiglass Art Places Emphasis on Environment

By Donna Brown
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Some people write songs to make the populace aware of the environment; others stage marches.

Salvatore Pecoraro uses styrene, airbrushes and plexiglass.

The California artist calls his plexiglass works a marriage between sculpture and paintings with effects by light and shadow.

The Alexandria Museum and Visual Arts Center will present a display of his works Saturday through July 31.

"The work plays off the environment," he said in a telephone interview. "Light is an important part of any artwork, but here it makes you aware of the environment and has a great deal to play in it."

Pecoraro said the pieces appear different in every gallery because lighting is not the same in each one.

The 25-year art professor teaches acrylic painting, airbrush, lithography, etching and drawing at DeAnza University, south of San Francisco.

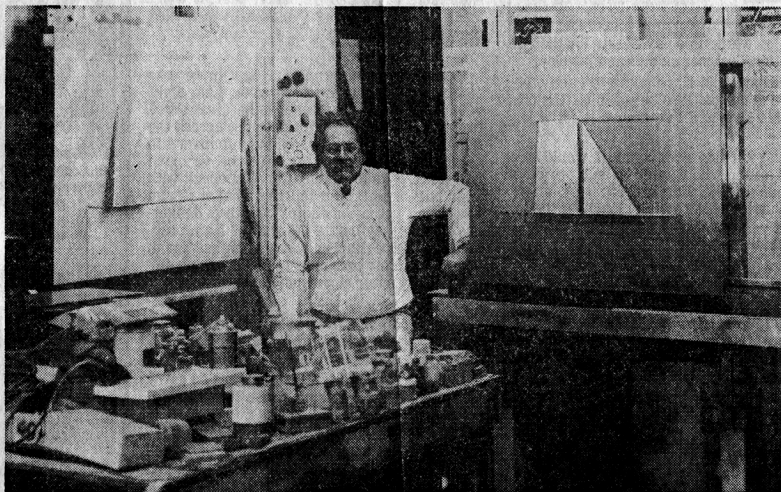
His works, which he calls constructions, are background squares of styrene painted with an airbrush. About a third of the way up the styrene is a narrow acrylic shelf on which plexiglass panels allow light to shine through.

This singular approach to art began when Pecoraro tried to paint prismatic light he had photographed.

He realized constructions used to get prismatic effects were art pieces themselves.

"I took 150 slides and got six paintings from them. I realized I was copying illusions from the slides ... that I didn't have to copy them, that I had the real thing right there, so I rejected the illusions and made constructions. It's an evolution from those paintings to the constructions."

Pecoraro started out in 1969 with paintings of skies.



Salvatore Pecoraro stands in his studio surrounded by his constructions. The California artist will be exhibiting his plexiglass designs at the Alexandria Museum Saturday through

July 31. His works consist of an airbrush-painted styrene background with an attached acrylic shelf. On the shelf are plexiglass panels which allow light to shine through.

That interest developed, he said, because during the decade of air pollution, everyone, especially Californians, was talking about the sky.

His atmospheric interests led to his most formidable painting.

Entitled, "365 Days," this piece is a portrayal of the sky for every day in 1970.

"I took a minimum of one shot a day where ever I happened to be. There are slides of the sky I took from an airplane traveling from Los Angeles," he

said. "I took 900 slides. I airbrushed some of them onto 1-foot-square plastic." The piece is 7 feet by 52 feet long, and "is a show in itself," he said. He hasn't exhibited it since 1977 and keeps his 280-pound piece of the sky in crates.

His current constructions, he said, are portraits of conflict and contrast.

"I see it as art of vulnerability," he said, relating the anecdote of a friend who worried the artwork might become scratched. "But it's the same idea as paying \$65,000 for a Rolls Royce." You accept the chances, he said.

"This conflict and ambiguity keeps me going. I am always trying to balance the order and form from the chaos in life."

Pecoraro said the largest of his constructions is only 6-feet square. But, there is "a lot of cutting, a lot of building that goes into this work." He plans to bring 23 to Alexandria, but probably won't show them all.

His constructions deal with formats, each following the general idea.

"Most were very symmetrical at the beginning," he said. The plexiglass pieces are squares or rectangles which Pecoraro wants to get away from. "Squares and rectangles are easy to do. I cut the shapes out of cardboard," he explained. "I have pounds and pounds of cardboard and I've noticed in the scraps some interesting shapes."

These new approaches, which include using metallic paints for the background, could create problems, but Pecoraro likes that challenge.

"I try to resolve problems through shadow, color, form and shape.

"An artist has certain ways to measure passages visually. He keeps feeding in new elements, but keeps some of the old, like yogurt is a basis for a culture, for the next project."