

ARTISTIC

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people in Germany," Bentley said in a phone interview from the foundation's headquarters in Norcross, Ga., "and I asked them if they had a machine in the United States. They said, 'Only one.'"

It was at Lizza Fine Art Studios in this town of 1,900, nestled in the Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania's northern tier. And it's why works owned by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and another destined for the Vatican have made their way to a place many native Pennsylvanians don't know exists. It has also placed Lizza Studios at the center of a growing artistic community stretching from Scranton to the east and to Wyalusing and beyond to the west.

Bentley says that owner Bob Lizza, a painter himself, convinced him "that he could do a better job than anybody else in the country - and he can. He's a perfectionist."

The Cruse CS 285 ST scanner that Lizza uses scans a single line of pixels at a time, at a rate of up to 1,000 per inch.

"That minute line," Bob Lizza explains, "is all that needs to be lit. The source of light is constant and doesn't move - the painting moves beneath it. [That means] the lighting is even across the whole piece, so you don't have any corners that are dark." Moreover, "each pixel scan can have di-

rectional light from just one area in order to give a textural feel."

Just how textural becomes clear when one sees the paper collage by Marvin Baker set on an easel in the back of the studio. Lizza routinely invites visitors to pluck off one of the slips of paper the work is evidently made of. When they do, though, they discover there's nothing to pluck - the vivid three-dimensionality is illusory.

Larry Baca, a color management and color reproduction consultant - among his clients is the Getty Museum, which has just obtained its own Cruse scanner - was present when La Madonna della Luce was scanned. The scanner, he says, "has unique capabilities, and Bob is very skilled and has more experience with it than anyone else in the United States. So the reproduction was really quite remarkable, the colors astoundingly accurate, the textural attributes of the original very nicely done."

Lizza acquired the scanner two years ago. He got "the best deal possible" by agreeing to have Lizza Studios serve as a demonstration site - "good for them and good for me." That is the reason New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art had a tapestry, a painting and a photograph driven here for scanning. The scanner enables Lizza to produce the highest-quality digital pigment prints imaginable, and the success of this enterprise underwrites the gallery at the front of the studio.

"I've lived in several major met-

ropolitan areas," says Betsy Green, the gallery's director, "including New York and Philly, and northeast Pennsylvania never ceases to amaze me... The art scene here is not only burgeoning and edgy, but we are also a very cohesive group."

A show Lizza mounted last year typifies the variety of art you can find here. It featured glass sculptures by Christopher Ries, who lives in nearby Keelersburg, and paintings by 80-year-old Czech surrealist Vojen Cech (pronounced Voyen Check) Colini.

The glass-art technique that is Ries' specialty is called "cold working." He carves crystal glass in its "frozen state," the way other sculptors carve marble. One of his works, The Golden Egg, is on permanent display at the National Liberty Museum in Center City. Another, billed as the world's largest crystal ball (57 centimeters in diameter and weighing 700 pounds) is housed at the American Ceramics Society's Ross C. Purdy Museum in Westerville, Ohio. Last spring, Ries had a successful exhibition in the Netherlands.

Colini has also been around. Since leaving his native Bohemia, he's lived in Paris, Venezuela (where he became a citizen), Canada (where he had his first show), New York, and now Scranton. He just had a show in Sag Harbor, but is better known in Europe, where he has exhibited widely in Switzerland, Germany

ON THE NET

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and France. His paintings, done in egg tempera on board, are a gentle, almost whimsical blend of dream and memory, filled with cool buildings and inhabited by the likes of comically stiff soldiers and meditative cats.

Tunkhannock is far from being an arty village on the order of New Hope or Woodstock, N.Y. The foundation of this town's economy is the world's largest Procter & Gamble plant, in nearby Mehoopany. But an artistic presence has been growing here for some time.

The Endless Mountains Council of the Arts, founded in 1993, is headquartered here and has 150 members. Then there's the Wyoming County Cultural Cen-

ter, which renovated the town's only movie theater. The Dietrich reopened in 2001 and hosts spring and fall film festivals (the next one opens Sept. 30). Also a venue for live theater and concerts, the center has gallery space as well, and sponsors art classes for children and adults.

Meanwhile, Brian Keeler, who describes his work as "realism with a punched-up palette" - and whose work was just in a show at Philadelphia's F.A.N. Gallery - has his own Blue Heron Gallery in Wyalusing, about 20 minutes west of Tunkhannock. And 20 minutes due north, painter James Penedos and sculptor Charles Welles are hard at work converting the former Springville village school (boys and girls, grades one through 12) into the Springville Schoolhouse Art Studios. When completed, a variety of live-in studio workshop spaces will be available, ranging

from 300 to 900 square feet, each with a private bathroom, kitchen and sleeping loft, and high-speed Internet connection.

As is often the case, once the artists settle in, others follow. Prime river view building lots are already for sale along the Susquehanna. Tioga Street, Tunkhannock's main drag, is getting a face lift, too.

"It's an area that's being discovered," says Philadelphia lawyer Robert Wert, who owns a house on Hart Lake outside Montrose, about a half-hour north. Wert owns the Rosemont Inn, a strikingly beautiful Victorian bed-and-breakfast in Montrose, and much else besides. He thinks the region has a promising, if problematic, future.

"It's a lovely area, there's a lot to do there... and it's not as crowded as the Poconos. I hope it never does get as crowded. A lot of us are concerned about that."

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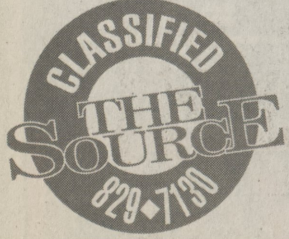
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