

# Brighton artist finds way to explore 'fascinations'

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

Artists are commonly stereotyped that they are somehow obsessed.

From appearances, Rochester artist Frank Anders would not fit that stereotype. He is genial and calm in demeanor. He lives not in a garret, but in a modest home in Brighton where he and his wife, Marion, raised their two sons and one daughter.

But Anders readily admits that he is obsessed.

While working for many years as a graphic artist in the advertising field, the Rochester native painted on the side.

"I never thought about selling anything, I just wanted to do it," Anders said.

"It's almost an obsession at times," he noted, then added with a chuckle, "You end up with a cellar full of paintings."

Indeed, his small basement studio contains a number of paintings — mostly illustrating natural scenes that reveal his love for snow, mountains and skiing.

But Anders' art also has a more serious side.

He has painted three works featuring St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish priest who sacrificed his own life to save a fellow concentration camp prisoner.

"I was fascinated with him ever since I read about him," Anders said. "The

idea that anyone would sacrifice his own life for a fellow prisoner just fascinated me."

Anders has also painted a chilling depiction of women tending to their children as they are being led by Nazis into gas chambers.

"I was always fascinated by the fact these women were going into the gas chamber with their children and they were spending their last moments trying to calm (the children) down — teasing them, tickling them — trying not to let them know where they were going," Anders said.

He based this representation on pictures he'd seen in books.

"The whole idea of the concentration camp is something I can't get out of my



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Brighton artist Frank Anders poses in his studio with one of his works based on St. Maximilian Kolbe.

mind," Anders said. He visited one such camp a few years ago, he added, noting, "Even 50 years later the hideousness of the whole thing is still in the air there."

Anders' own life, fortunately, has not been touched by such horrors.

He was born Frank Anuszkiewicz to parents who had emigrated to the Unit-

ed States from Poland. He attended the parish school at St. Stanislaus Church before going on to Edison Technical High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1944 at age 17, later becoming a radio operator.

In early August, 1945, Anders was aboard a troop ship loaded with U.S. Marines on their way to Japan when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Rather than taking part in an invasion, the troops helped with the occupation of Japan. The war ended with Anders seeing no actual combat.

Anders later recalled this time through his artwork. He created a painting showing him with his two best friends in the Navy, and a copy of the letter sent by the Navy to his parents explaining that he had been scheduled to take part in the called-off invasion.

After leaving the Navy, Anders used the G.I. Bill to pay for training at an art school in Chicago.

"I always wanted to be an artist— there was no question — but I never expected to be an artist," Anders said. He was a cartoonist in school and in the Navy for his ship's publication. "I was always drawing," he recalled.

But his family raised questions about how he expected to make a living as an artist. Indeed, before enlisting in the Navy, he had been an apprentice tool-maker.

"We came from the north side (of Rochester) where a college education — before the war — was unusual," Anders explained. "You didn't look for job satisfaction. You looked for a job."

Nevertheless, his art training paid off. Anders found work as an advertising artist. Over the years he worked for a number of stores — including the former McCurdy's in downtown Rochester. He also designed covers for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

As he embarked on his career, both Anders and his brother decided to shorten their names for professional reasons to Anders — after General Wladyslaw Anders who commanded the Second Polish Army Corps, which consisted of Poles who escaped Poland after the country was overrun by Germany and the former Soviet Union.

Anders' contact with his Polish heritage also came through in other ways. In the 1960s, he wrote and illustrated children's books — two of which were based on stories told by his mother and his wife's aunt. He provided also the illustrations for Kathleen Urbanic's 1991 book, "Shoulder to Shoulder: Polish Americans in Rochester, N.Y. 1890-1990."

Recently, Anders has been pursuing his own art more actively. He joined the Pittsford Art Group, holding the first solo exhibition of his work in November at the Williams Gallery of the First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Ave.

Professionally, Anders is currently doing freelance work, often serving as a consultant on projects. Computers have changed the graphics field, he noted.

"It's a whole different ball game," Anders said with a little sadness. "The business that my contemporaries and I knew no longer exists."

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