

ValleyScene



Dennis Grund

Christine Andreae works on a drawing in her studio in Bentonville. Below, examples of Andreae's work include, left, a balsamroot and a bitterroot.



Courtesy art

Dark and deep



Courtesy art

Local artist finds inspiration in dead leaves, roots and other botanical treasures

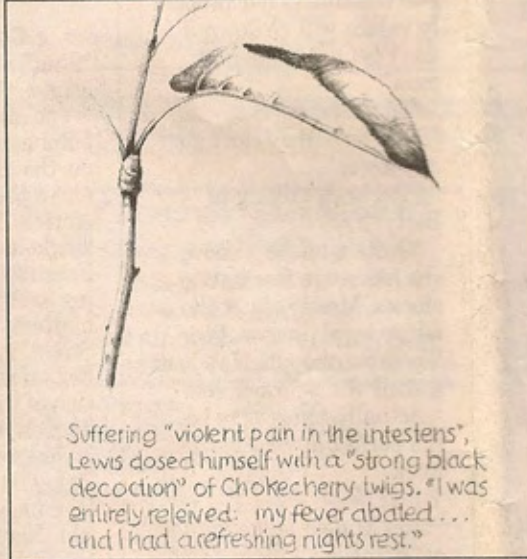
By Eliza Hewitt
Daily Correspondent

BENTONVILLE

Author Christine Andreae began taking walks in the Shenandoah Valley to focus on her creative writing, but she soon developed a passion for drawing — with colorful results. Some artists find their muses in unreal situations or everyday drama. But Andreae, who lives outside of Bentonville, found her inspiration in objects most people sweep away — dead leaves.

"I found I couldn't focus on my writing," said Andreae. "I started taking walks and picking things up and what caught my eye were dead leaves. They were very sensuous with their spines curled and their colors were so dark and deep."

Little did she know, these inspirational



Courtesy art

Suffering "violent pain in the intestens", Lewis dosed himself with a "strong black decoction" of Chokecherry twigs. "I was entirely relieved: my fever abated . . . and I had a refreshing nights rest."

nature walks would not only lead her back to art, but to a national exhibition of her work. Andreae also attributes her renewed interest in painting and drawing to coming down with shingles and fibromyalgia, painful conditions that increase skin sensitivity, make it difficult to sleep and result in blinding headaches.

"I just started drawing and I hadn't drawn since high school. I started taking workshops and signing up for some courses at Corcoran [College of Art and Design]. I get a great deal of joy out of it. I'm really not

interested in a second career. I really don't want to become commercial with it," said Andreae.

While taking classes at the Corcoran in Washington, she met Leslie Exton, head of the Botanical Art section at the college. Exton invited her to join in an upcoming yearlong exhibition, "The Botanical Treasures of Lewis and Clark."

In order to accurately draw the plants found by the two explorers, Andreae packed her bags and left for Idaho last May along with 14 other artists and James Reveal, a botanist and photographer. They stayed in Orofino for a week and went out every day into the fields to research the plants found there.

"We would go out, pick plants, photograph and go back to our rooms to sketch. It was a nice and generous group and I came back with a suitcase full of plants all bagged up and labeled," said Andreae.

Exton asked her to exhibit two of her paintings, "Heart of Bitterroot" and "Arrowleaf Balsamroot." Her work also was included

Deep

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booklet that contains several American Indian medicinal herbs to accompany an upcoming group exhibition over which Exton would be the curator.

"We went last May and the drawings were finished in March. But there were some weeks of not working on them and there were months of researching before I completed them. It's a very meditative thing," Andreae said.

When drawing for the exhibition, Andreae said she preferred to use pencil and graphite as her medium, with color subtly added. The drawings were extremely detailed, down to the veins of leaves and slight discolorations in the plants.

"With pencil and graphite



Dennis Grundman/Daily

Christine Andreae works with pencil and graphite to create her drawings.

it's very relaxing and there's a repetition. Without the distraction of color I can pay

more attention to shadow and detail," said Andreae.

She found one of her botanical inspirations in a most unusual place — the Internet.

For a drawing of bitterroot, she used an unusual canvas, a deerskin, full of bullet holes, purchased on the Internet auction site eBay.

"The bitterroot was a sustaining gift to the Saish Indians and I decided to do a picture of the root. I cut one open and saw the red heart. I saw the connection between my religion and theirs because the heart is like the pictures of Jesus Christ with the heart showing. I found a piece of deerskin and decided to draw the bitterroot on it," Andreae said.

As well as being an accom-

plished artist, Andreae also has written several books. The latest, "When Evening Comes," is a nonfiction narrative based on her experiences when volunteering for a hospice.

The Botanical Treasures of Lewis and Clark runs through until July 9 in the Corcoran Gallery of Art and displays both artistic renditions of the plants found on the expedition and also samples collected by Lewis and Clark.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. Wednesdays through Sundays and until 9 p.m. on Thursdays.

More information on the exhibit can be found online at www.corcoran.org or by calling (202) 639-1700.