A pioneer of holographic art

Eccentric artist's assemblages and installations expressed his passion for optics and his curiosity about visual perception

BY ROBIN LAURENCE, VANCOUVER

In 1975, when Jerry Pethick moved from San Francisco to a remote Columbian island with his wife, Margaret, and young son, Yana, pessimists might have predicted his career, as a pioneer of holographic art, would collapse into obscurity.

Located off the east coast of Vancouver Island, their ferry ride distant from the mainland, Horsby Island was hardly the site of avant-garde art activity. Nor was it an easy place to make it to do pioneering three-dimensional imaging techniques with which he had been identified.

"You had to be pretty self-sufficient to live here," Margaret Pethick says. The first two summers, the Pethicks lived in a caravanserai in the side of a cliff. In the caravanserai, in the care was cozy and comfortable, "Jerry built decks and things," Ms. Pethick says. "It was beautiful — right above the water (with the tide) coming in and out.

"At high tide, we had to climb down a cliff, but at low tide you could go around on the rocks. Yana became an until clairvoyant.

Later, the family moved to a more comfortable cave-like dwelling.

Mr. Pethick, who was born in London, Ont., in 1935 and educated as a sculptor in London, England, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, appreciated the island's isolation and the opportunity to work uninterrupted.

On a small, cluttered-shape of land in the Strait of Georgia, he was able to focus completely on his art, grateful for his freedom from the pressures of urban life. Still, he balanced his island existence with teaching and business activities in Vancouver, touring widely and exhibiting frequently around the world.

Pethick's work has diversified over the years, from sculpture to painting to photography, and has been exhibited in galleries and museums around the world.

Pethick's work is often characterized by its use of light and shadow, as well as its use of found objects and materials. His pieces often evoke a sense of mystery and wonder, as if they are telling a story or inviting the viewer to discover something hidden within them.

Pethick's work has been described as a unique creative voice, and his use of light as a central element in his work has been praised by critics and collectors alike.

His work has been featured in numerous publications and exhibitions, and he has received numerous awards and recognitions for his contributions to the field of holography.

Pethick's work continues to inspire and captivate viewers, and his legacy as a pioneer of holographic art will undoubtedly continue to influence artists for years to come.

JERRY PETHICK 1935-2003

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