

I am a Paratrooper in Vietnam: It has been a long day patrolling and I am leaning against a tree, resting. An enemy sniper takes aim and fires. I feel the wind as the bullet blows through my hair.....

I am an undercover Narcotics Agent in Europe: I am alone and walking down the center of a dark, deserted road. Approaching me are two drug traffickers who are holding a hostage. We all have our hands in our jacket pockets. As we approach I pull out two guns and in a half-squatting shooting stance, both arms fully extended, yell, “Police, hands up!” As they start to circle me.....

I am a sailor in Mexico: My boat is anchored with two others on the Island of Monserrate. A midnight storm strikes. One boat is hurled onto the rocks of the shore. Another is sunk. I make it out alive.....

I am a Chief of Police in California: I am tracking a killer on the run in a wooded area. I yell out for him to surrender. He turns and looks at me with a Mac 10 machine gun in his hands. He puts the barrel in his mouth and pulls the trigger.....

I am a painter, a poet, and a writer: I think one day I will write a book.

“A talented artist” is how the Monterey County Herald described Alexander Kerekes.

For the past forty years Alex has worked with silver, semi precious stones and photography as an art form. His natural progression eventually led his artistic ability to express itself on canvas.

Working with acrylics, mixed media, and natural essentials Alex has blended all these elements in an effort to bring a sense of joy to the viewer.

Alex is also a poet and writer and recently authored a book titled “Finding Lost Civilizations,” which occurs in Mexico and chronicles the unearthing of a lost civilization and the meaning of their symbols.

“Art is inspired by many things around us. My joy is in the idea, a thought, or inspiration, which develops within me when I see an object or experience an event that transforms itself onto canvas or paper. I enjoy sharing that process and I am always delighted if someone else can experience that joy through my work.”



Alex At Work – Developing An Art Project

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Baja Fishing



The Boat



The Third Man

A brush with the law Presidio chief of police also an artist

Posted on Fri, Mar. 01, 2002

A brush with the law Presidio chief of police also an artist

By KATHRYN McKENZIE NICHOLS

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Two years ago, Alex Kerekes was walking by a gallery window in downtown Carmel, and a painting in the window caught his eye. So did the price tag: \$3,000.

Kerekes, who had never painted a picture in his life, said to himself, "I can do as well as that guy." On the way home, he bought supplies, and lo and behold, created his first painting.

Now he's on his way to exhibiting his work in a solo show at a Carmel gallery.

Kerekes doesn't have a reputation as an artist in this area, but does in an entirely different arena - he's the police chief at the Presidio of Monterey, with a 30-year career in military intelligence and investigations.

Police work and brushwork don't seem to automatically go hand in hand, but for Kerekes, they do. And it's not his intention to strike it rich as an artist - in fact, anything but.

"My intention is not to sell paintings, but to share them with people," said Kerekes, who won't sell a painting for more than \$300, a price that also includes the frame. "It's more for pleasure, and a desire to share."

It was while he was working in Europe in the 1970s that he first became fascinated with photography, and used his free time to take pictures of the wonderful sights around him, and to experiment in the darkroom.

All of this has somehow culminated in his side career as an artist, something he pursues avidly in his hours away from work.

Kerekes is now completing paintings for his first solo show, which will be held later this spring at The Grove Homescapes in Carmel. His striking, almost abstract acrylics invite the viewer to determine the story behind the painting. His "Shadow Series," for instance, shows silhouettes of human figures, some more defined than others.

One, for instance, is very clearly an image of a man in Middle Eastern attire with a rifle; the title is "Searching for Osama." Kerekes said he was inspired by a recent Time magazine cover. Others are what Kerekes calls "representational landscapes," inspired by such local views as Odello Field. In a third series, he uses Asian imagery in mixed media pieces, placing Chinese coins and characters on colorful backgrounds.

"I sometimes work on three paintings at a time, and they'll have nothing in common with each other," said Kerekes of his wide-ranging subject matter.

Kerekes describes himself as a "World War II baby," the son of a Russian mother and Hungarian father who immigrated to Canada after meeting in a camp for displaced persons.

He grew up in Montreal and decided to move to the States as a young man, following a Florida vacation that made him long for a warmer climate: "People were in shorts, T-shirts and flip-flops."

Kerekes joined the U.S. Army in 1966, went to Vietnam from 1968-69 as an infantry paratrooper, and then embarked on a career in intelligence and investigation. Later on, he worked in anti-terrorism investigation and drug enforcement in Europe.

But even as he was doing this serious, intense work, he was also making time to be creative.

"During this time frame, I was doing lots of photography, as well as lapidary work," he said, noting that he learned lost-wax casting methods in the process, making rings and other jewelry.

Kerekes won several awards for photography and had several solo shows in that medium. In his darkroom work, he experimented with sepia toning and a variety of papers for developing.

Since 1980, he had been "coming and going" from the Monterey Peninsula, and in the 1990s, moved here permanently. He's been police chief at the Presidio since 1996.

It was that chance stroll through Carmel that brought painting to the fore.

"I had never painted, but always felt I could," said Kerekes. "I said, I'm just going to go ahead and do it."

Entirely self-taught, he bought books on art, but never used them. "It's a self-discovery process," he said. "I'm probably re-inventing the wheel every time, but it's more fun that way."

He's still experimenting and tinkering as he goes along, in his kitchen, which doubles as his studio.

In his painting "Shadow in the Sand," he mixed real sand into the paint, for texture. Years ago, he bought Chinese coins and colorful stones on a whim; now some of them have found their way into the "Second Circle" series of Asian-themed work that he is doing for his Grove Homescapes show.

And on at least one painting, he started with a brush - but finished applying paint with a paper towel.

"I do different things to make (the painting) interesting or exciting," said Kerekes.

At least 15 of his paintings will be seen in the Grove Homescapes show, titled "Art in A Vault: The Chief of Police as an Artist." The exhibit really will be in a vault, since the building was formerly a bank.

One venue that won't take on Kerekes' work - yet - belongs to his sister, a gallery owner in Quebec.

"She's told me, 'Don't quit your day job,'" he said with a smile.



Shadow In The Sand
23" x 35"



The Watcher
23" x 35"

The Madonna Project

The Madonna Project was an effort to incorporate a relic terra cotta figure with a large painting taking on the elements of a mural. The terra cotta relic was originally the interior decoration of a provincial Catholic church that existed in the village of Apt in southern France. The church was built in the mid 1600s with embellishment continuing until the late 1800s. The church had fallen into disrepair and was disassembled in 1963. It was put into storage and recently rediscovered.

When I came upon these remnants I was fascinated with their history. And as I started viewing these terra cotta pieces I began to visualize a process wherein their beauty could once again be shared in a mixed media format for all to see. For the Madonna I decided to construct a 6'x4' plywood frame, overlaid with stretched canvas on which to paint and form a cutout to fit the terra cotta figure. The provenance of this exquisitely detailed terra cotta figure can be attributed to the Virebent foundry in France, renowned for their reproductions of 11th and 12th century Italian carvings.

Dimensions: (L) 72" x (H) 49" x (W) 4"

Madonna in Blue 06/19/03



Saintly visions: When Alex Kerekes isn't protecting us from terrorists, he's making art.

Alex Kerekes, the Painting Policeman, finds inspiration in an ancient form.

By Sue Fishkoff

Photo by Randy Tunnell

There's no law that says a fella can only do one thing. Still, it tickles the funny bone to come across a juxtaposition that bends stereotypes--the weight-lifting nun, the school kid who runs for president.

Here's another: The police chief who paints.

That would be Alex Kerekes, former chief of police at the Monterey Presidio, now deputy federal security director in the Department of Homeland Security's transportation security administration, whose newest piece of art, "The Madonna Project," is on display at Homescapes Carmel.

"The Madonna Project" is the biggest piece Kerekes has created in the two years since he first picked up a paintbrush. It's a six-by-four-foot canvas stretched over a plywood frame, painted blue, with a hole cut out of the upper right side into which he's inserted an antique terra cotta figure of the Virgin Mary. The figure, which originally decorated the interior of a 17th-century church in the southern French village of Apt, languished in storage for years after the church was disassembled in 1963, until it ended up at Ancients, an antiques store in Carmel Valley. That's where Kerekes came upon it. "When I saw this piece, I knew I wanted to make art of it," he says.

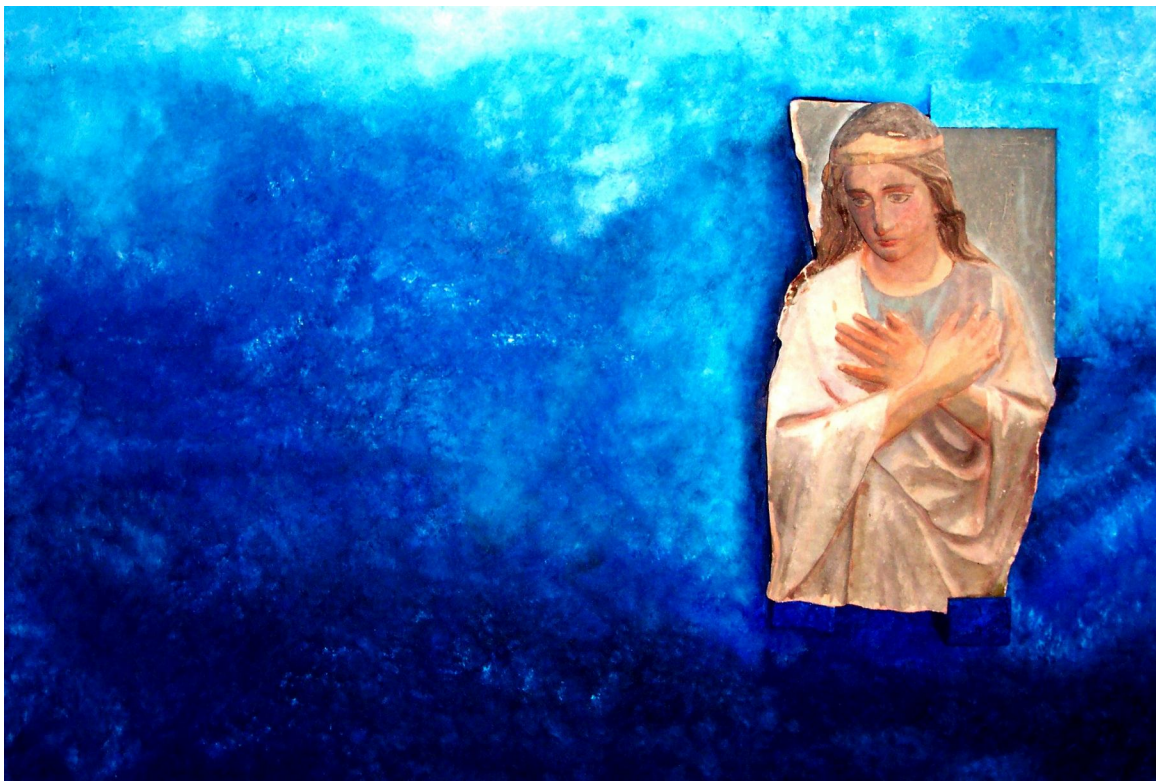
Kerekes bought two terra cotta figures that day--the Madonna, and the torso of an unnamed saint, which he's mounting on a metal stand as his next project. He says he views the figures more as art objects than religious relics, "but there's probably something subconscious that makes me treat them with respect." So when he saw that terra cotta Madonna in the shop, something in the figure's face

called out to him. "I connected with her serene expression," he says. "At one time it was part of a church, and I felt I wanted to bring it around again. So I did that, by incorporating it into a painting."

The two figures Kerekes bought were created by well-known artists who molded terra cotta forms in bulk for churches throughout southern France. He says, "you can't buy this stuff," which was why he was so eager to acquire the pieces when he spied them.

"The Madonna Project" weighs more than 200 pounds. "It's humongous," he says. "It was a nightmare to hang. It'll take three times as many people to take it down."

"The Madonna Project" can be viewed Friday from 5-8pm at a reception at Homescapes Carmel, Dolores at Seventh in Carmel.



Monterey County Herald|

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Presidio's Kerekes picked for federal security post

By KEVIN HOWE

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A veteran law enforcement officer whose 25-year career has included firsthand experience in fighting international terrorists has been named head of federal transportation security on the Monterey Peninsula.

Alexander Kerekes, chief of the Monterey Presidio's police and fire departments, has been appointed deputy federal security director for the Transportation Security Administration of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Kerekes will serve under James Thomas III, federal transportation security director in San Jose. Thomas' jurisdiction includes passenger-serving airports in Monterey, San Jose and Modesto.

Kerekes, 53, will be leaving his post at the Presidio of Monterey Police headquarters Dec. 13 and assume his new duties overseeing security at Monterey Peninsula Airport on Dec. 15.

Taking on an agency closely involved in homeland defense is a return to familiar ground for Kerekes, a career Army man who started out as a combat paratrooper walking point in Vietnam and went on to serve with the Army Criminal Investigation Division.

Kerekes spent several years with the Criminal Investigation Division in Europe during the turbulent 1970s and '80s, when the left-wing West German Baader-Meinhoff Gang was waging terrorist attacks financed by bank robberies, drug-running and kidnappings.

During the same period, the Palestine Liberation Organization pulled off the 1972 Munich Olympics kidnappings of Israeli athletes, which ended in a hail of gunfire and explosions that killed all the victims and perpetrators.

As special agent in charge of the Rheinberg office on the Germany-Holland border, Kerekes recalled, he and other agents were trying to stem terrorist-related cross-border drug smuggling.

"I came back from leave to town early, and called the office, but told them to not tell anyone I was back. 'Don't call me unless they blow the building up,'" Kerekes said.

"Ten minutes later my partner Phil calls. 'Well boss, guess what. They just blew up the building.'"

Kerekes was decorated for his work providing security to Gen. James Dozier, a man Kerekes said was always at high risk when he came to Europe after he survived a 1981 kidnapping by Italian Red Brigade terrorists.

Dozier, then the highest-ranking U.S. military officer in southern Europe, was held for 42 days before he was rescued in Padua by Italian counter terrorist police.

"Before I left Germany, there was a lot of drug activity and activity involving terrorist sightings that pointed to the potential probability of a hit on a general officer," Kerekes recalled.

Within a month, terrorists attacked an armored limousine carrying Gen. Frederick J. Kroesen, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army in Europe, with a rocket-propelled grenade. The vehicle's armor deflected the missile and Kroesen was unharmed.

"You would see German police at the airport carrying MP-5 submachine guns, with German shepherds," Kerekes said. "Here it is, 25 years later, and we're in the same mode I saw back then in Europe."

An asset of his 25 years in security and law enforcement, Kerekes said, is "an international background, having worked with local, state, federal and foreign police and intelligence agencies throughout my career."

He retired from the Army in 1989 as special agent in charge of the Criminal Investigation Division's Los Angeles office.

In 1996, Kerekes became chief of the Presidio's federal police force and early this year was named the Presidio's public safety director when the Army resumed responsibility for providing fire protection at Fort Ord.

Kerekes oversees police, fire and security intelligence issues for the military communities with 225 police, investigators and firefighters under his command, including 150 military police - soldiers assigned to guard the Presidio and other military installations since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

No successor has been named, he said.

Prior to his Presidio assignment, Kerekes was an investigator with the Office of Special Counsel, assigned to cases involving improper political activities by federal employees and violations of "whistle-blower" protection laws. Before that, he was the civilian in charge of physical security at Fort Ord while it was still an active Army post.

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Trip inspires author's first book

By KEVIN HOWE Herald Staff Writer

Retired federal lawman Alex Kerekes thought he would write a memoir about his parents' experiences as stateless refugees in post-World War II Europe, or his own experiences as a Vietnam infantryman and Army homicide investigator when he retired.

Mexico, it turned out, became the writer's detour. Kerekes had left home at age 17 to enlist, served as a paratrooper in Vietnam, and continued his military career as an Army Criminal Investigation Division agent in Europe during the turbulent 1970s.

The Herald

Kerekes later served as federal police chief at Fort Ord, then led both police and fire services there as head of public safety, and ended his career as the transportation security administrator for Monterey Peninsula Airport.

His career meant he had only sporadic contact with his parents, who lived in Canada. His dad was from Hungary, his mother from Kiev, and Kerekes himself was born in a refugee camp in Tuttlingen, Germany.

Kerekes, 59, had traveled in Mexico before so after his retirement in 2005 he proposed a road trip in Mexico with his 83-year-old father, Sandor Kerekes. They started in the coastal town of Guayabitos in the Mexican state of Nayarit, which he had visited in the mid-1990s and where he remembered seeing a tall cross erected on a hillside south of town.

The two "AJeandros" revisited the site and were told by the man who built it, Pedro Guzman Sanchez that it rested on the remnants of an old civilization. '

That launched an odyssey through Nayarit, where father and son discovered a trove of shaft tombs boulders bearing ancient petroglyphs and the sites where villages and temples once stood - the lost civilization of the Tecoxquines of Mexico's western central coast

The more he traveled, the more Kerekes was struck by the repetitive appearance of spiral figures carved on stones and painted on long-buried tomb sculptures.

One village he and his father visited, Zacualpan, reputedly contained ancient mummies he said and he and his father were told they could be found in a museum in town.

" When I heard 'museum,' I pictured a building" Kerekes said. In fact, the "museum" was an open park strewn with carved boulders and potsherds.

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Some of the boulders had bowls hollowed into them to grind corn, and grinding stones lying on the ground" that fit perfectly in the hand."

In a number of cases, Kerekes said, crosses were carved in the stones along with the spirals, giving rise to a legend among the Spanish missionaries who saw them in colonial times that the Apostle Matthew had preached Christianity among the Tecoxquines.

Once the eye is trained to look for remnants of the past, Kerekes said, a person looking for them finds them everywhere. Later, traveling in New Mexico he saw the same spiral symbol on Tome Hill near Socorro.

Beguiled by the spiral symbol, Kerekes learned through research that it recurs worldwide - in Italy, Scotland, the American Southwest, and Ireland.

The psychologist Carl Jung theorized, Kerekes said, that in addition to our immediate consciousness, "there existed a layer of the unconscious that was inborn and not derived from personal experience."

A phenomenon of this deep psychic layer may well be the recurrence of particular symbols in children's and humanity's earliest artwork: grids, dots, spirals, zigzags, circles and curved lines.

For him, Kerekes said, the spiral came to symbolize "creation and infinity. It is our conception, birth, life and the human spirit. It is the beginning and a time without end."

Kerekes said he came away from the trip with his father with a vision of the interconnectedness of human beings and an urge to write about the experience.

The result was "Finding Lost Civilizations," published by Park Place Publications in Pacific Grove in July.

The Herald

Chapters are lavishly illustrated with photographs detailing the scenes and artifacts Kerekes describes, and the book is on the shelves of The Pilgrim's Way bookstore in Carmel and The Works bookstore in Pacific Grove.

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