

Thomasville show gives Danny Pietrodangelo 25 shots

By Randi Atwood

Special to the Democrat

Danny Pietrodangelo began telling stories with his camera as a child, although he never had any formal training in photography.

"My dad was a professional photographer, but he never made a living at it," says Pietrodangelo. "He did weddings and events. I trailed along behind him and learned how to develop film and print photos in his rickety darkroom."

Pietrodangelo's own photographs have been exhibited in such places as the Grove House in Miami, the Jacksonville Museum of Art, the Pensacola Art Museum and many others, including in group shows in Scotland and the former Soviet Union.

Pietrodangelo, who came to FSU from Miami in 1968, worked for the state for 10 years, primarily as the communications director for the Department of Health and Reha-

IF YOU GO

What: Flaunt 25 Exhibit

When: Friday through Oct. 17

Where: 25 locations in downtown Thomasville

Cost: Admission to various venues is free

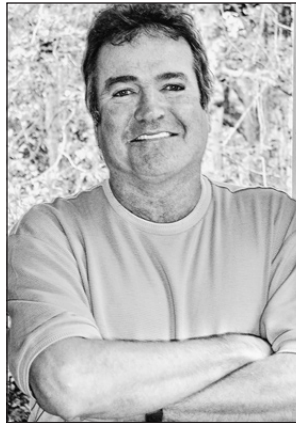
Contact: Visit www.thomasvillearts.org for complete information

ilitative Services. His specialty was public information, and during that period he started expanding from still photography to video, creating public service announcements.

"At that point, it was brand new technology, so it was pretty much self-taught for everyone out there," he laughs. "After that, starting my own company was kind of a natural coalescence of my photography and video work."

Now he runs Pietrodangelo Production Group, a Tallahassee-based media production and e-learning course development firm.

The most lucrative area for a small production company, he says, is in the creation of training videos and programs. His company did commercial work for a long time, but about 10 years ago began working with the U.S. Navy on



Danny Pietrodangelo has a media production company and a passion for photography.

their training programs.

"We develop distance learning courses for naval officers all over the world, on CD and online," he says. "They're media-intensive — lots of video, lots of interactivity, quizzes and 3-D animation, which is one of my loves."

Pietrodangelo is particularly proud of how the company's relationship with the Navy has progressed. Instead of just filming pre-written scripts, the company is now entrusted to develop the course content.

"They give us the reference materials — readings, handouts and lec-



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ture notes — that they use in resident classes, and we turn that into a distance learning course," he explains. "We write the scripts and everything now."

The Navy has also underwritten several of Pietrodangelo's documentary films, which range widely in topics. He produced a film about the war in the Falklands, for which he won a Silver Remi Award at the International Houston Film Festival, and another called "Homeless in an All-America City," which won a national Telly Award.

Pietrodangelo says the most rewarding thing about his work is that he has gotten to go places and do things most people never will.

"I've traveled to China, Cuba, Singapore and Vietnam to take photographs," he says. "That's been an incredible experience. People are far more friendly than we can imagine. I've been received with open arms pretty much everywhere I've gone."

Along with his photography and video work, Pietrodangelo also writes. He taught media writing for eight years in FSU's Department of Communication and his pieces have

appeared in the *Orlando Sentinel*, *Florida Magazine*, and the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

"My degrees are in communications and English literature, so I've always written. I really enjoy it," he says. "I've written about all sorts of things — China, depression, health care in Haiti, dogs, immigration. I have a piece in the works about how I've become a country music fan."

After many years of trying to show the world the way it is, Pietrodangelo's latest artwork has begun to mix fiction with truth.

"When I started doing photography, it was all straight — you didn't manipulate anything. What you saw is what you took," he says. "It's only in the last few years that I began to realize there's nothing taboo about veering from the traditional."

He always tried to emphasize colors in his photography, but now he has begun to enhance the existing colors to make them more vibrant and fantastic. He has also started changing the content of the images themselves.

"That's part of the fun of this new kind of work," he says. "You can create a cityscape that never existed using a computer. It gives you a chance to really expand what you're seeing, because you see it twice — once in the field

shooting, and then again when you come back and manipulate it."

Pietrodangelo is debuting his new work in "Flaunt: 25," a partnership between the Thomasville Center for the Arts and Downtown Thomasville Main Street. The juried art competition celebrates the Center for the Arts' 25th anniversary, and will feature 25 artists showing 25 works each for 25 days in 25 downtown Thomasville locations. Pietrodangelo's work can be seen at Ally B's Boutique on North Broad Street. He is thrilled to be part of the exhibit.

"I'm really a big believer in art in public places," he explains. "I love the idea of exposing people who might not otherwise be exposed to art. I went through the Atlanta airport once, and in the international terminal there was this exhibit of massive African sculptures that I would never have been able to see anywhere else."

Pietrodangelo is excited for the chance to pursue this new direction in his work, but he also has a new focus in his life. He is about to become a grandfather. Both his son and his daughter are expecting their first children in the next several months.

"Being a grandfather is my next big thing," he says. "If nothing else, it'll be a great opportunity to take a lot of pictures!"

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