

Lifestyle & arts

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Times photos by Jason Wachter

Award-winning watercolor artists Dan Mondloch, 18, and his father Jim work out of their home and studio in St. Cloud.

Father, son share painting passion

By John Molene
Times staff writer

Sitting in his cozy studio in his St. Cloud home, Jim Mondloch holds a rough-looking \$2 paint brush in his hands. He explains that's what he uses to paint parts of his award-winning watercolors.

It's the brush of a house painter, not a renowned watercolor artist. But here's the rub. Mondloch is both.

Or to paraphrase Madison Avenue: There's no job too big, no job too small for Mondloch. Only the size of his canvas changes.

House painter by day

By day, Mondloch has been a professional painting contractor for more than 20 years. At night, on weekends and in the winter, he's an accomplished watercolor artist.

Jim's son, Dan, 18, is

following in his father's footsteps as a watercolor artist. A first-year student at St. Cloud State University, Dan has already painted several award-winning works.

Both had works featured in the recent Central Minnesota Watercolorists show and sale. They hope to sell more of their works during an open house at their gallery this weekend. Father and son concentrate on still-life works and Minnesota's rural landscape, especially the woods, waters and wildlife.

"People paint what you like in life," Dan Mondloch said. "It's a direct extension of the artist."

Not to mention that wildlife and still-life works sell quickly, Jim Mondloch noted.

There's few waking hours that Jim Mondloch, 52, doesn't have one



Dan Mondloch, 18, is a student at St. Cloud State University and has won awards for his work.



A painting by Dan Mondloch.



A painting by Jim Mondloch.

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kind of brush or another in his hand. In addition to his job and his avocation, Mondloch also loves teaching watercolor-painting techniques.

"I really enjoy it," he said. "It's probably my first love, next to that is sharing it."

A high school passion

The elder Mondloch started dabbling with art in high school. He began painting in earnest in 1985 after taking courses in watercolor and design at St. Cloud State University.

He followed that up with workshops and sessions on watercolor techniques with local and Minnesota artists, including Frank Webb, Rallie Kinney and Gerald Korte.

Mondloch said he prefers working in watercolors.

"I really like the challenge of watercolor," he said. "Watercolor is extremely difficult. It's a strong challenge. There's a lot of planning and you have to learn to handle your medium. It's not as easy as working in oils and acrylics."

Mondloch said he finds his work as a watercolor artist dovetails nicely with his profession as a house painter.

When the weather is warm, he spends long days doing all the house painting he can find. When the weather turns cold, Mondloch finds he has a canvas waiting to be filled.

"I used to have a lot of downtime in the winter," Mondloch said. "Now I don't. One of the things that has come forward from house painting is I can use the huge brushes to create nice big washes."

Following father

Son Dan began painting watercolors as a 15-year-old high school freshman and had immediate success.

"I had an urge to do it," he said. "It just seemed pretty natural."

One of Dan's paintings won best of show honors at a 2001 area high school art show. Another of his works was named best watercolor.

"He's already got people collecting his work," said his father.

"I told Dan flat out, as soon as he can to move out of town," Jim Mondloch said with a smile. "I've got this area up to a 60-mile radius."

While father and son don't share studio space, they do help each other and critique each other's work.

Jim Mondloch's works have been displayed in numerous art shows and fairs, and he's been the featured artist at several venues. His paintings have won awards in the Zapp Bank Art Show and at shows hosted by the Minnesota Rural Arts Association, the Artists of Minnesota and at Fargo/Moorhead.

Mondloch also has led numerous residency programs at area schools and in community-education classes. During the past two years he has taught watercolor art classes for the Paramount Arts District.

While Mondloch spends more and more time on his art, he's not about to give up house painting anytime soon.

"I'd quit only if I could find another way to exercise," he said. "Painting houses keeps me healthy."

The Mondlochs will host a "Spirit of the Season" open house in the Stonewood Gallery in the Log Cabin Court, 107 20th St., Waite Park. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.