



Kurt von Behrmann says the work of Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe inspired him to create this Japanese kimono painting, *It Hangs Here*.

Artist's career leads down father's path

By Ernest McIntyre
Special for The Republic

Is there such a thing as an "art gene"?

If so, artist Kurt von Behrmann probably got his from his father. Although his father died before he was born, the duo share remarkably similar careers in the arts. Both became artists, art professors and arts writers. What makes the coincidence more amazing is that they weren't raised in the same environment.

"Stuttgart, Germany, was where I was born, but my American mother returned to Kentucky when I was very, very young," von Behrmann said.

He showed an early talent for art and developed it at Michigan's Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he earned a master's in fine arts. Having no desire to become another

If you go

WHAT: "Lyrical Interpretations" exhibition featuring artist Kurt von Behrmann.

WHERE: Paulina Miller Gallery, 817 N. First St., Phoenix, (602) 307-9643.

WHEN: Through Jan. 24. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and by appointment.

ADMISSION: Free.

young and starving artist, von Behrmann became, like his father, an arts professor.

Teaching at the University of Arkansas and Kentucky's Morehead State University wasn't fulfilling enough for von Behrmann. Without knowing about his father's involvement in writing art criti-

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ques, the son began to write art reviews for publications such as Chicago's *The New Art Examiner* and many others. When von Behrmann found out the similarities between his life and his father's, he was surprised.

"My mother spoke very little about my father," von Behrmann said. "Without knowing it, I found out later that I had actually followed in his footsteps as a writer, professor and a painter."

Phoenix art lovers best know von Behrmann for his paintings.

His current exhibition at Phoenix's Paulina Miller Gal-

lery contains several works, including a multidimensional acrylic painting of a Japanese kimono, titled *It Hangs Here*.

The work hanging in the gallery is the result of von Behrmann's combined interests in Japanese visual art and the paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe and Frida Kahlo.

"The most obvious connection in this work is Frida Kahlo's *My Dress Hangs There* painting," von Behrmann said.

"I wanted to find a skeleton on which my ideas could hang. The idea that mysteriously emerged was that of the kimono."

Fashioning a kimono out of cotton, von Behrmann then attached it to the canvas and be-

gan to paint.

"There is no way that I can predict where the work is going," the artist explained. "Divine accidents do occur in art. Serendipity, like opportunity, seems to prefer the prepared."

If you go to see the work of Kurt von Behrmann, be prepared to spend the time to do more than just look. The works of the son, like those of the father, are like chapters that chronicle the life and thoughts of the artist.

As the son says about both his and his father's life's work, "Even in the illusions of art, some truth is revealed, and with it a new perspective is added."