

## Beckley arts

By Wendy Perrone

# The Midland Trail Gallery in Fayette County

Imagine you are on a back country road, miles away from any major hub of civilization. Suddenly, you see in front of you what looks like an old country store -- only there are three sets of moose antlers hanging over the porch roof. An unfinished painting of a red-tailed hawk adorns the white outside wall on your right. On your left, an old but freshly painted movable billboard sign identifies this unusual edifice as The Midland Trail Gallery. Once inside the door, you may suddenly wonder if you have blundered into the Old Flemish Style wing of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., but the mixture of quilts, wreaths and rustic atmosphere belies the possibility of any wrong turn.

What you see around and before you is the creation of David and Chereese Weaver, she a potter, he a painter, potter, photographer and inventor. Together they have assembled a wondrous assortment of fine art from West Virginia artists, interspersed with their pottery and David's incredible paintings. David has made a life-long study of Renaissance art, culminating with a two-year apprenticeship with master realist Dalhardt Windburg. After several years of study in Texas and shows at the Daugherty Cultural Art Center and Laguna Gloria Art Museum in Austin, the Weavers followed a job offer to Alaska. The job involved art in a way -- he was hired by the Alaskan State Crime Laboratory as a forensic artist, where he was asked to reconstruct skulls of homicide victims and examine fingerprints. From this job, he came up with an invention that highlights fingerprints at a crime scene, even making the fingerprints glow in the dark. The invention is now marketed by 3-M around the country.

While in Alaska, David met Yuri Sidorenko, a Russian artist under the protection of the Russian Orthodox Church. Sidorenko was transferred undercover from church to church in Russia, restoring the icons and paintings of the Russian Orthodoxy. From this Sidorenko learned many of the Renaissance-era painting techniques, which he introduced to David at a workshop. This workshop led David to a four-year stint learning from and working with Sidorenko, recreating the old styles



Artists David and Chereese Weaver have assembled a wide assortment of works from artists and craftsmen from around the state. The country store-turned-gallery is also filled with the couple's paintings, pots and photos. Pictured here is David's painting "Curiosity."

used by Rubins and Van Dyke to create their masterpieces.

As his abilities as a painter solidified, private collectors began seeking him out, often purchasing his paintings before they were finished. He was invited to the White House and also has been featured on CNN. After seven years of living in Alaska, the Weavers settled in West Virginia in June 1993. With a few wonderfully lucky breaks, they opened their own gallery and are living their dream. They have filled an old country store with their pottery and paintings and added other pottery by Jeff Burr and Diane Pittis; dried floral wreaths by Janet's Junction as well as photography montages and paintings by Andri Kharisov and Igor Tishler. The result is a gallery so interesting you can't walk out easily in under a half hour. There are plans to expand the gallery by at least two rooms, which will provide display space and free up some of the more crowded studio areas.

During the month of November, David's works will be shown at Carnegie Hall, his contemporary abstracts downstairs and his still lifes upstairs. These works will also be in the New York Art Expo in March 1995, and other works are displayed by interior designer Nancy Simmons of Lewisburg. At 37, David Weaver is one of our nation's true master painters. A visit to the Midland Trail Gallery or to his show in Lewisburg is definitely worth the effort.

Gallery hours are Tues.-Sun. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. or by appointment. The Midland Trail Gallery is located at the intersection of Highway 60 and Rt. 41, near Babcock State Park. 