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Couple focus their creative talent

by Jan Sawyer

Interested in video, film and/or photography?

If you are, you might want to catch an exciting exhibit put together by a couple of young and talented North County residents.

When Neil Salley of Smithfield met Kathy Kissik of Cumberland at the Livingroom, a Providence musical hot spot--something clicked between them and it wasn't long before a close relationship developed.

Neil is entering his senior year at Emerson College in Boston and Kathy is attending the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in that same city.

The couple had to book their exhibit 14 months in advance at AS220, a club on 71 Richmond St. in downtown Providence that offers month-long exhibits and weekend performances of anything from classical music to avant garde craziness, according to a spokesman there.

The 14 months gave both Neil and Kathy a chance to form their ideas about what it was they wanted to say. It was, Kathy notes, a valuable time to look within themselves.

Neither student did the project for a class or a grade but used the opportunity to push the envelope of their creative juices.

They chose to focus on building--in all senses of the word. "Building is so physical

and psychological," Kathy says.

Her work consists of a series of black and white 11 x 14 photographs on which she used charcoal for emphasis. After a process of toning, enlarging on a laser scanner and piecing together on black roofing paper, the finished product is mounted on wood and polyurethaned.

A weather-beaten barn on the verge of collapse is the subject of one photo. Another shows an elderly woman with deep, emphasized wrinkles. In still another entitled "the worker", Kathy shows a figure looking overwhelmed by his/her environment. "Many people seem to relate to that," Kathy says.

While Kathy's forte is in 35mm film, Neil employs super 8mm and video film with seven minute and four minute loops. His work is shown simultaneously on three t.v. monitors mounted in metal and attached to a cinder-block wall.

The 24-year-old got his inspiration from interviewing seven different people from different walks of life. Those interviewed included artist Armand Lamontage of Scituate, a writer, his parents, Kathy's grandmother, a six-year-old boy--"He gave me some of the best answers--and his grandfather--"He gave me the kindest answers."

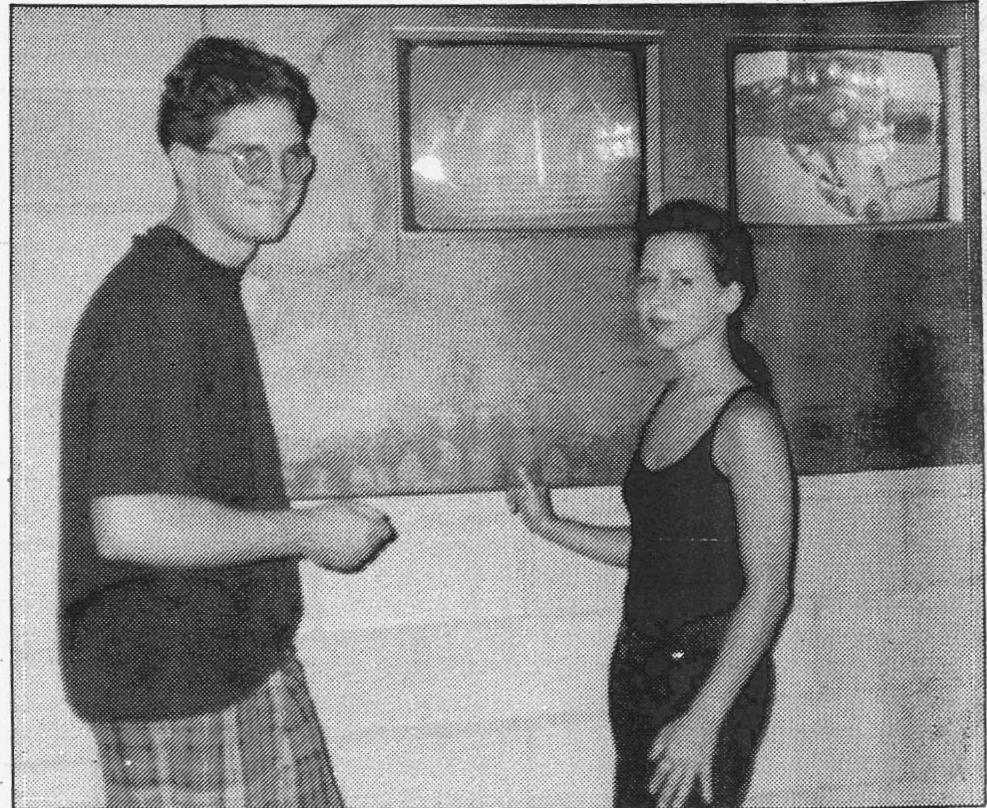
Neil asked them for advice--if you could change something in your life, what would

it be? He also asked them about their life's philosophy--what would it say on a bumper sticker?

Converting everything he learned into images, Neil's televised show is something to behold. Hammers, saws, children, barbed wire, candles, etc. fill the screens in a way that is never boring or confusing.

All of this, has been a learning experience for both Neil and Kathy. "We realize that we are always in the process of building and tearing down...Everything we have been taught is what others have built and you realize it's not necessarily true. You have to build your own morals, your own ideas, and relate to people and images in your own way," Kathy says.

Neil and Kathy's exhibit can be seen at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday evenings before 8:30 performances. It can be seen during the week by appointment. Call 831-9327 for more information.



ONLY TWO OF THREE television screens that Neil Salley installed are shown in this photo. Neil and Kathy Kissak's work is currently on exhibit. (Observer photo)