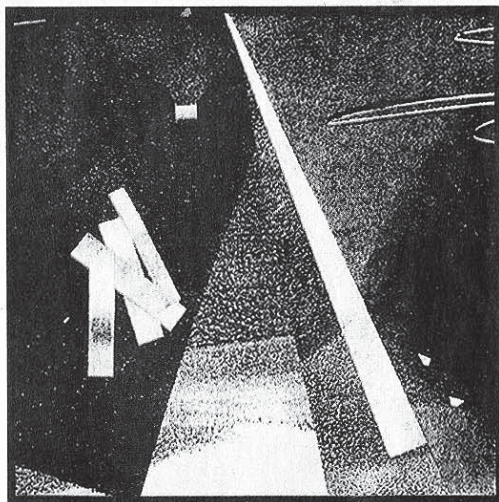


Brecht poem inspires 'dark' period



Loes van Riel's "Dark Times 4" is among works seen at Angelo.

Shifting shadows of engulfing darkness dominate Loes van Riel's small monprints enhanced with collage. Eight of her stunning compositions are displayed at Angelo, on the Charlottesville Downtown Mall, through June.

Dramatically presented within wide, triple-layered black mats, the exquisitely composed images appear to carry whispers on the wind or secrets veiled in mellow mists.

Affixed to the surface of each composition is a glittering accent, such as rows of tiny sterling silver beads that sparkle like stars in the evening sky or miniature rolled papers, circles, stripes or screens painted in 23-karat gold as luminescent as the sun or moon.

To create the sheer black, shimmering veils that ripple like chiffon across her picture

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surfaces, Van Riel begins by drawing on glass with small brayers (rubber rollers) dipped in black printing ink. The inked glass is then placed on special pre-soaked printing paper in a printing press, and the final image is transferred to the paper through pressure. Only one significant composition, suggests a watercolor can be made using this tedious process.

Van Riel has titled her show

"Dark Times," in homage to Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the German poet, novelist and playwright of epic drama. Brecht wrote:

"And in the dark times/
"Will there be singing?/
"There will be singing/
"About the dark times."

"When I found this poem,"

Van Riel said, "I realized it was exactly what was going on with my work. I was going through a dark time myself, and I realized I was going to make a dark series."

Van Riel recalls her life in Amsterdam, where she was born a year after the end of World War II. Her Catholic father had been a member of the Resistance, an underground movement that rescued and aided Dutch Jews and others who were fleeing from the

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Nazis. He devoted many years of his life to helping refugees, and was invited by the Holocaust Museum in Washington to come to America and be interviewed for its archives.

"I acted as his translator," Van Riel said, "because my father speaks only Dutch. He told them that during the war he gave the refugees coupons for food while they were in hiding and false identification cards. Hearing his stories became a big part of my life."

Van Riel came to America in 1966 and was subsequently married for many years to an artist who made handcrafted jewelry. She learned to create the surface designs for his major pieces. After they divorced, she married painter Alan O'Neal.

"What I do now," she said, "is make fine art for the walls. ... For me, gold leaf is light. It is ethereal and has such luminescence."

Angelo, at 220 East Main St., specializes in handcrafted jewelry. It is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through