Larry Ferguson stands next to his photograph “Hong Kong from Inter-Continental Hotel, Kowloon, China, February 2003,” the current exhibit at the Lied Art Gallery.

Ferguson’s ‘View’ at Lied

Omaha artist presents photos of the world to a local audience.

By LOUIS JACKSON
Scene Reporter

The Lied Art Gallery launched its spring schedule with Larry Ferguson’s exhibit of 68 black and white photographs from “The View From My Room” last week. The works were taken and the broad range of time the works represent.

“I admire his work which is a precisionist kind of darkroom photography. Very, very careful of every image. He likes a very sharp focus and I admire that in a photographer,” said gallery director the Rev. Ted Bohr, S.J.

All photographs were captured between 1975-2007 from rooms at places such as Mexico, Chile, China and U.S. cities including San Francisco, New Orleans and Lincoln. Hotels dominate most of the views which work to achieve the visual angles used in most of the exhibit. "Everywhere he went, he decided to take a picture by the window just for his own interest. Once he started he decided to keep it up. What I like about this is it forces us to think why we look out of windows and is there anything outside my windows that I perhaps missed," said Bohr.

In the photograph "Frances Lawhead’s Cabin" taken in Silvergate, Montana, Ferguson pays a visit to his grandmother’s cabin. The view shows a snow-covered woods scene outside the house with a pickup truck. The image is so detailed you can see the window screen from up close.

"That sense of precision again and yet it’s not hitting you until you actually spend time with it. You can tell the photographer loved that place just by the way he photographed it,” said Fr. Bohr.

"I’m not here to make pretty pictures ever. That’s a missed concept a lot of people have about me and my work," said Ferguson. "They’re really internal and very emotional for me. What they do is they signify and they actually give physicality to the stories that I can tell about places."

"What’s unusual about this show is that he makes money by being a commercial photographer. This (exhibit) is stuff he’s done out of his own artistic interest and 90 percent of his works have never been shown before," said Bohr. A native of Nebraska, Ferguson has his photography studio based in Omaha and has served as one of the city’s art commissioners for six years. He received his BFA from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1977.

Ferguson also shared some of his experiences growing up toward becoming the veteran artist he is now.

"If you have success early on, the odds are you won’t continue. You will be a flash in the pan and its over," Ferguson said. "So that’s generally by the time people are showing in big time museums like the Sheldon or the Joslyn, you’re old, you’re a dinosaur. Your works been certified gold. You have to put in your time."

Ferguson sympathized with the position college student artists are in trying to figure out their way, and he placed an emphasis on the importance of understanding the business of art.

"If you don’t figure out how to sell your work, you’re going to starve, or you’re going to have to figure out something else," Ferguson said.

Growing up on a farm, Ferguson initially received some skepticism from his father about the validity of his vocation. This later changed.

"He’s really proud of me now because I got to do the things he didn’t get to do at the time. It makes him extremely happy," Ferguson said.