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## **CURIOSITY AND OBSERVATION LEAD TOM YANCEY'S QUEST FOR THE CREATIVE (Published in April/May 2005 in Columbia Home magazine) - 4/1/2006**

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### CURIOSITY AND OBSERVATION LEAD TOM YANCEY'S QUEST FOR THE CREATIVE

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Curiosity and observation are the keys to artistic creativity, Fayette artist Tom Yancey says.

Admiring the beauty of a silver crescent moon just before dawn can be an art-inspiring sight, for instance. "It's just a matter of being observant around you and being able to look at small things in nature -- insects, birds objects," he said. "Right now, with the changing of the seasons, as the colors burst forth, it's miraculous as the universe becomes alive again; to me it's thrilling to see it all happen. And it's also a matter of trying to maintain the eyes you had when you were young. It's just amazing to watch kids; they don't miss a trick."

Yancey likes to work in acrylics, oil pastels and mixed media. He occasionally works with watercolors and creates three-dimensional pieces using papier-mache. He keeps folders of possible art subjects for later inspiration and often works from photos or preliminary sketches.

Lately, he has been applying his painting skills to art restoration, rejuvenating a painting and its frame so that it may be enjoyed by future generations. He charges \$65 an hour for a restoration.

"A painting may need to be cleaned, there may be some abrasions on it, in terms of having to do some in-painting," he said. "There may even be some holes in the canvas and things like that. Some of them are quite old."

Not too long ago, Yancey said he did restoration work on some paintings that had been stolen from the Conley House on the MU campus by a wayward group of students. "They called me up and said, 'Could you come over?' because they had damaged some of the portraits, and one was a historical portrait that they put in that house," Yancey said.

Yancey, professor emeritus of art and music at Central Methodist College, retired from teaching in 1995 after 37 years on the CMC faculty. Joining the music faculty in 1958 as a teacher of piano, organ and music theory, he also taught art history, pop art and art education. He served as curator of CMC's Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art and the Stephens Museum/Gallery of Art from 1993 to 1998, when he opened an art studio in downtown Fayette.

He says his musical background helps his art. "They're wedded together. They go hand

in hand," he said. "Two of the great compatible disciplines are art and music. It's a great arena for where we are now in the world. With all this conflict right now, the great arenas are in art and music. People come together and they forget all these other things because it is a common language. It transcends all culture and all distinctions of nationality."

Yancey's art has appeared in exhibitions across the Midwest, and he has won many awards, including the Curator Scholar Award, which provided an opportunity to participate in the 1991 Summer Art Study Program in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

His one-step method to art appreciation? "Always be curious; always look for something beyond the ordinary pathway you're going to take each day," he said. "When I taught at Central Methodist, I learned to separate the students in terms of those who had curious minds and were walking a different pathway every day, as distinct from the ones who would just follow the one in front of them onto their class, day after day. Occasionally, the curious student would wander down the hall and come into the museum. Others would just pass in front of that door, day after day, going to their class, walking the same pathway."

Yancey says he is a constant traveler on those paths himself, exploring new ways of looking at the old and old ways of looking at the new.

