

# Photographer does not let medium interfere with the message

By JERRY KLEIN

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Jane Alden Stevens, who delivered the Bunn Lecture in Photography Wednesday evening at the Hartmann Center at Bradley, is not a person to let a medium get in the way of a message. Her message is one of unbridled imagination, and while one might not think such elements as painters Edvard Munch and Turner, Beethoven, woodcarving, movies, books and empty churches (just for starters) have

much to do with photography, she has a different — and better — idea.

There is no photographic or fine arts background in her education. She was simply a European education major from back there in the days when you could roll your own curriculum. But she obviously has an eye, an ear, a mind, a good set of emotions and a remarkable flair for finding in photography the ideal medium for expressing the complex mix that makes up a creative

person.

Take these for quotes: "I love photography, I can do anything with it." And "The future's out there. Whatever I end up doing, that's what I'm going to do."

A little different, to be sure, maybe a photographer's version of Nadia Salerno-Sonnenberg, able to show a photo postcard of herself on her 30th birthday wearing a plastic Annie Oakley skirt she had when she was nine.

"Not everything you do has to

be perfect in order for it to be important for your development."

And it is a concept she illustrated in her talk with lots of things — not all of them perfect — that led her into working with foreground-background issues, combination prints on aluminum which integrated people and nature, and a variety of alternative processes that extend photography beyond the camera and the film into an imagery that approaches the fantasies of the mind.

In her show at Heuser there are some extraordinary things indeed, among them those Cyanotype works in deep blue, one, "The Open Door" showing a little kid climbing a ladder with the stars beyond the door and the earth hanging out there like a balloon. Another mingles stars and fields of tulips, and the images and inventions are as rich and basic as those of a child who digs a hole and imagines himself plunging into China, and upside down at that.

She uses 3-D pieces of plexiglas, and huge film and plexiglass combinations. The most notable of these is her huge "The Four Elements," in which earth, air, fire and water provide a stage for a variety of human experiences. It is, to photography, a veritable Isenheim Altarpiece, but more secular, more modern. She is humorous, touching, bizarre, sad and while there is a humor and liveliness in her work, there is loss and death as well.