



Democrat photo / David A. Wilson

Artist Billyo O'Donnell, who is known as Billyo in the art world, rendered the Moniteau County Courthouse in oil Monday in the midst of a "painting tour" of his home state of Missouri. He is collaborating with writer Karen Glines to turn the works into a one-of-a-kind book.

Artists returns to roots to paint Missouri

By DAVID A. WILSON
Democrat Staff

Artist Billyo O'Donnell, a native of Warrenton, found himself in California Monday, where he worked on one of his planned art works for an upcoming book.

O'Donnell, who goes by the name Billyo in the art world, found that his art career took him from his Missouri roots, but he has returned to collaborate with writer Karen Glines to produce a book called "Painting Missouri."

Billyo plans to paint something in each county in Missouri for the book. The volume will then be fleshed out with descriptive essays on each county. Glines is also from Missouri.

Together, they hope to create a collection of paintings and essays that will be inspiring and memorable to the viewer and reader.

Billyo said he picks some feature from each county, but does not follow one single theme. In one county, he said, he picks some geological formation, in another, something of economic importance. In Moniteau, he selected the historic courthouse to render in his chosen medium of oil.

He hopes the finished volume will allow others

the opportunity to see Missouri through the artist's eyes. Billyo said he had been interested in art since his earliest days, but some of his early works, mud sculptures, were shortlived because his brothers and sisters used them for target practice for their BB guns and slingshots.

After high school, he went to Southwest Missouri State University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in art in 1980.

Since that time he has worked as an illustrator producing corporate motivational material, and carrying out commissions from other organizations and companies, such as Nissan.

He found representation in a Laguna Beach, Calif., art gallery and painted for the California art market.

He returned to Missouri and said the state is now in a unique time for art, much of inspired by the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Billyo said he prefers to work in oil, but right now there is a great deal of experimentation and "anything goes."

He now lives in Eureka with his wife, Peggy, and their children in a 170-year-old cabin, part of which once served as home for his grandmother's family.