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Entertainment > Visual Arts

## Visual Arts XML + MY YAHOO!

Thursday, Jul 19,

2007

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Posted on Sun, Jul. 15, 2007

### THE CREATIVE LIFE

By Gaile Robinson

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**Personal Stats:** Ken O'Toole, 53, is as multihyphenate painter-photographer-video artist and Fort Worth native.

**Now showing:** The city of Kent, Wash., is marking the 25th anniversary of a famous earthwork piece, and to help celebrate, a nationwide invitation was extended to artists who create work with environmentally conscious themes. O'Toole submitted



Star-Telegram/Rodger Mallison

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samples from his "Cultural

Ghosts" series, and two of his black-and-white photographs of plastic shopping bags on their flight to the wild were accepted. They'll be on display in Kent at the Centennial Center Gallery through July.

His first forays into video manipulation of his photographs are on display at Dallas' Victory Arts Plaza, the large pedestrian mall outside the W Hotel and the American Airlines Center. He says he was shocked that they were accepted: "They are just glorified screen savers. A lot of people involved in that project are directors and educators who know so much more about the process. It's like someone with an Easy-Bake Oven competing with a four-star restaurant, but they allowed me to serve alongside the four-stars."

**The muse called:** Two years ago, O'Toole was driving Fort Worth's Loop 820 when he saw what he thought was a skeleton hanging in a tree. On closer inspection, it turned out to be a large sheet of weathered plastic caught in the bare branches. He paused to photograph the apparition just as a gust of wind caused it to do an animated dance. Since then, he has been on the lookout for these "ghosts created by our disposable culture," he says.

**Quitting the day job:** Just three years ago, O'Toole worked at RadioShack as a technical writer. He backed into photography, thinking that an additional skill might prolong his employment. "The work force kept shrinking, and the job descriptions kept growing," he says. He began experimenting with digital photographic effects on his computer, found galleries that would exhibit his artwork and then left the corporate world. Now his full-time job is his art, and for that, he says, "there aren't enough hours in the day."

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