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## Couple opens new art gallery on Grandview Avenue

Thursday, August 24, 2006

By **ALAN FROMAN**  
*ThisWeek Staff Writer*

Much of the sculpture on display in the new art gallery Deborah Shaheed opened last month on Grandview Avenue is intimately familiar to her.

The gallery features pieces carved by her husband, Omar, a nationally known sculptor whose work has been featured on HGTV's Modern Masters and in numerous publications.

Shaheed first opened Kibibi's Art Gallery last October on East Long Street in Columbus. It opened in last month in its new location at 1423 Grandview Ave.

"The area we originally opened in is undergoing a revitalization effort, but it's proceeding very slowly," Shaheed said. "There weren't any other businesses around us. We needed to find a location that had a lot of walking traffic and attracted people who appreciate fine arts.

"Grandview Avenue is a really nice fit for our gallery," she said.

Along with Omar Shaheed's work, the gallery displays work by Upper Arlington resident Alan Hamwi, who often creates life-like sculptures of animals. He has received numerous commissions from the Columbus Zoo. He also creates abstract work.

Other artists on display at Kibibi's include Shawn Walburn, Michaelangelo Lovelace and Denson Parker. The gallery also has a large display of one-of-a-kind jewelry by local and national craftspersons.

"We feature fine sculpture and paintings, with a lot of abstract pieces," Shaheed said.

Before starting her own gallery, Shaheed displayed her husband's work in a gallery she operated out of their home.

"It got to be a bit too much to be displaying and selling artwork out of our home," she said. "We also used to go to a lot of festivals and show Omar's work there. That got to be really draining, with all of the travel away from our family. You have to load and unload all of these sculptures with no guarantee you would sell many items."



BY LORRIE CECIL/THISWEEK

**Deborah and Omar Shaheed, pictured through one of Omar's sculptures, recently opened Kibibi's Art Gallery in Grandview. The gallery features sculptures by Omar and jewelry by Deborah.**

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**When was the last time you went to a county fair?**  
(Choose one answer)

- This year
- Last year
- Within the last five years
- My God, I haven't been to a county fair since my great-grandparents were alive!

Two years ago, after "a really long drive" to a show in Colorado, the couple decided to stop traveling to festivals, she said.

"Opening a gallery was a big risk, but I'm really enjoying it," Shaheed said. "It's really great when people come in and you see the 'oh wow' look on their face."

Omar Shaheed said he has been sculpting for about 20 years, although he originally studied painting and art illustration at Memphis Art College and San Francisco Art Academy.

"I became interested in sculpture after discovering the work of Henry Moore," Omar Shaheed said. "It was his work that really inspired me to become a sculptor."

His abstract sculptures are often inspired by the jazz music he listens to while creating works, he said.

"I really enjoy the act of sculpture itself," Shaheed said. "Taking a piece of stone and discovering a shape for it by manipulating it, it's an exciting and rewarding process.

"Sometimes a shape of a stone suggests an idea, but often you really don't know what the result is going to be until you start carving," he said. "Sometimes, you break a stone and the resulting shape totally changes the direction you're heading into.

"That leap into the unknown is a particularly stimulating part of sculpture, Shaheed said.

A grand opening celebration of Kibibi's Art Gallery will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday.

The gallery's name comes from the middle name of the couple's daughter.

"Kibibi means 'little lady' in Swahili," Omar Shaheed said. "Our daughter was born prematurely so we gave her that name as a middle name."

The gallery is open from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

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