

PHOTOS BECAME A BOOK

Mannequins speak to him

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TERRACE PARK – Most people return from their European travels with pictures of the Eiffel Tower, grand cathedrals and Roman ruins.

Not Jim Rauth.

He came back from his most recent trips abroad with dozens of photos of store-window mannequins.

Travels throughout the United States yielded more mannequin photos. His passion for photographing mannequins drove him from posh clothing boutiques in Palm Beach, Fla., to San Francisco sex

shops.

"I've taken a lot of kidding from friends," the affable 70-year-old Terrace Park resident said with a smile.

But the book of mannequin photographs he recently published is no joke.

Simply titled "Mannequin," the book contains 225 arresting and artful images of a wide assortment of mannequins.

They peer from the glossy pages, eerily life-like. They appear as elegant ladies, little girls and boys, cowboys, Seminole Indians, African-Americans, geishas, soldiers, nurses, ballerinas and sexy show-girls.

"They're sort of mysterious," said Rauth, a retired Procter & Gamble Co. manager with a lifelong passion for photography. "Mannequins have been around since King Tut. They've evolved considerably. They're trying to be representations of ourselves."

The book includes a brief history of mannequins written by Rauth's partner, Diane Syme.

Rauth invested \$60,000 in the publication of 2,500 copies of this book. He said he never considered approaching a publisher with his project.

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The Enquirer/Amie Dworeck

Jim Rauth has compiled his photos of mannequins into a book that he self-published and is selling.

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"I wanted the joy of learning," he said. "This book isn't really about mannequins. It's about having a dream and following it."

Rauth will sell copies of the book for \$30 each from a Web site, www.rauthphoto.com, that will be set up in May. People interested in ordering a copy before then can contact him at jrauth@fuse.net.

"This was not a commercial enterprise," Rauth said. "If I sell a few, fine. If I sell a lot, fine."

He has given copies to friends and has sent copies to libraries and museums.

His interest in mannequins began during a trip to France in 2004. As he took an evening stroll in Paris, a store

window display of stylized mannequins caught his attention.

"I tried taking pictures of them, even though there were reflections in the window and the lighting was lousy," he said. "When I put the prints in a gallery, they sold well and people asked me if I had more."

That's when he started his serious search for interesting mannequins.

He took most of the photos in the book through display windows. He photographed the mannequins in whatever pose they happened to be in and used whatever light was available.

Only three photographs were taken in Cincinnati – two mannequins at the now-closed Trivet Antiques down-

town and one at Gayle's Vintage Clothing in Milford.

Rauth became so enamored with mannequins during his project that he bought three of them.

One is dressed in an evening gown and stands on his piano. Another is in a French maid's costume and stands in the dining room. The third stands outside the bathroom shower and wears a floppy hat and a scarf around its shoulders.

He delights in showing them to amused guests.

But Rauth, who suffers the long-term effects of childhood polio, recognizes a deeper connection between the mannequins and human beings, a connection he attempts to convey in his photographs.



The Enquirer/Amie Dworecki

The French maid dummy is one of three that Jim Rauth keeps around the house. Another decorates his piano, and a third stands outside the shower, wearing a hat.

"Some of the mannequins are cracked, broken, have lost fingers and have tape around their head," Rauth

said. "Like them, we human beings get damaged and broken as we go through life. But we need to keep pushing on."