

# Like mother, like son

By Betsey Bruner  
*Sun Staff Reporter*  
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Jill Torrance/Arizona Daily Sun Brandon Oberhardt, a local photographer, is reflected in one of photographs that was inspired by five years of fighting fires on the Kaibab Plateau. Oberhardt currently has an exhibit at the Environmental Restoration Institute in the NAU forestry building. To order this photo, go to <http://photos.azdailysun.com>  
[Buy this photo online!](#)

When he was born, his mother was already painting day and night.

Now Brandon Oberhardt, 27, like his mother, watercolorist Roberta Rogers, is pursuing a career as a fine arts landscape and documentary photographer.

"She was always painting," he said in a phone interview Monday. "Ever since I was a little kid, I've looked up to her. I've gotten to watch her business grow. She usually gets up at 6 in the morning and gets right to work and also paints into the night."

Rogers, 60, is well-known in Flagstaff as a homegrown watercolor painter whose work has graced countless walls in local galleries, postcards and publications for 30 years.

After 35 years here, she moved one year ago to Tubac with her husband, Gary Fahrenz. The artist colony south of Tucson has given her a chance to paint new landscapes and Mexico-inspired subject matter such as Talavera pottery, cactus and missions.

## A FAMILY TRADITION

Oberhardt collaborated with his mother over the holidays, participating in her annual exhibit to raise money to fight hunger at Brandy's Restaurant & Bakery on East Cedar Avenue. He showed a collection of color photos of the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, Flagstaff, Organ Pipe National Monument and Mexico.

They each raffled one of their pieces and raised a combined total of \$460 to benefit the Care & Share Food Bank and Northern Arizona Food Bank. That amount was matched

by the restaurant.

A 2003 graduate of NAU in photography, Oberhardt's artist statement said his primary aim is to share the beauty of light and color that he's been lucky to witness.

"Brandon, he is so visually observant," Rogers said in a phone interview Monday, before driving back to Tubac with paintings from the Brandy's show. "He loved being outdoors from a very young age. His step-grandfather took him hunting, and my husband took him hiking and camping, so, he was so in tune with a more natural environment."

Rogers has three sons: Brandon, and Blaine Oberhardt, 31, from a first marriage, and Jesse Fahrenz, 19, from her second marriage.

Blaine is a marketing researcher for the Hallmark Channel in Hollywood and Jesse attends Pima College in Tucson.

#### A CLOSE VIEW OF NATURE

All three boys helped their mother in her work.

"They were very helpful in saying if something doesn't look right," she said. "Your kids will be the first to know. They helped with matting and framing. Now, I'm thrilled to be able to help Brandon with his matting and framing."

Although Oberhardt was no expert at painting or drawing when young, he did have some special visual talents at an early age, his mother said.

"He just did the normal things that kids do, but I can tell you, he can spot a deer or coyote or natural thing before we hardly get focused," she said. She also recalled her middle son had snatched her old Pentax SLR camera when he joined a photography club in college.

Oberhardt has been practicing photography for the last six years, working for the past three years with a digital SLR, which allows him to be mobile with his constantly moving lifestyle.

He is following one exhibit with another, synthesizing his experiences fighting fires during five summers on the Kaibab Plateau in a new photographic exhibit, "Fire and the Kaibab Plateau," in the Ecological Restoration Institute in the Forestry Building at NAU.

Oberhardt is currently working in South Dakota on the Black Hills Fire Use Module with the National Park Service. He is home for the winter on furlough, living with his father, Flagstaff resident Bob Oberhardt.

## VISITING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

Although he's visited his family several times including Christmas, he has no plans to move to Tubac.

"Flagstaff is where my heart is," he said. "I can see from my mom that she's ready for a new challenge. Going to southern Arizona is like a whole new wealth of things to paint, with Mexico and the artwork down there. I like being up here with the pines and the Grand Canyon. It's good to have a base in southern Arizona, though."

Rogers has returned to Flagstaff several times during the year.

"We miss all our friends," she said. "It's just such a wonderful community. People are trickling down to visit."

Her watercolors are selling well in the Tubac area, but she still exhibits at The Artists Gallery in downtown Flagstaff.

"I still paint lots of Flagstaff things, from memory and photographs," she said.

The art of both mother and son was well received at the Brandy's show.

"They are definitely exhibiting and donating again next holiday season," said Brandy Wojciak, co-owner of Brandy's. "They are just these wonderful people. Brandon had this horse silhouette photo up, which was just amazing. When people realized the connection, that he was her son, they just loved it, and they loved the talent."