

Frank Wysochansky shares his irreverent humor

By Geoff Gehman

Of The Morning Call

If angels can dance on pin heads, why can't monks arm wrestle? If monkeys can play "See/Hear/Speak No Evil," why can't monks play monkeys? And while we're warming up, who says friars can't hula hoop?

Welcome to the blessedly merry mind of **Frank "Wyso" Wysochansky**, a self-taught artist, funny philosopher and brother of four priests. His jolly portraits of holy men on their off-hours are displayed at Lehigh University, site of a 2006 retrospective of coal-mining pictures he made in his hometown of Blakely, Lackawanna County, once a mining metropolis.

Frugal and inventive, Wysochansky (1915-1994) created many of these portraits on paper smeared with melted black and white crayons. This sculptural drawing freed him to depict monks as marvelously mercurial souls. Their bodies are as rotund as cookie jars, their eyes as bright as searchlights, their beards as wild as root cages. They arm wrestle in a politely competitive trance, clink steins with Oktoberfest smiles, play "See/Hear/Speak No Evil" as a cheeky charade.

Wysochansky's father and grandfathers were miners. He made most of his money from mining



Steven Lichak The Wyso Foundation

MEN OF THE CLOTH are given a frisky treatment by self-taught artist Frank 'Wyso' Wysochansky. His work is on display at Lehigh University.

pictures, a specialty suggested by his brothers. Not surprisingly, many of the monks here resemble miners in hassocks. Their skin seems dusted by coal, or splattered by mineral deposits. Their robes have bold, tubular strokes, or waxy seams. A ghostly metallic glint gives them a grimy dignity.

Everything is lighter in Wysochansky's pen-and-ink cartoons of friars. Silhouetted on rust-stained, parchment-coarse paper, they do the darndest tricks with relics. Challenged by a little girl, one frisky fellow hula hoops a rosary cross around his waist.

■ **"See No Evil,"** by Frank "Wyso" Wysochansky, through Feb. 27, Lehigh University, Girdler Student Gallery, University Center, 29 Library Drive, Bethlehem. Hours: 8 a.m.

to 10 p.m. daily. 610-758-3615, www.luag.org.

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