

Attitudes differ, but artists provide interesting show

Sculptor vows to leave area

STORY: CORRINE ABATT
PHOTOS: STEPHEN CANTRELL

Anyone who has ever hand rubbed a piece of wood until it is gleaming satin smooth knows it takes hours, not minutes.

Walter Fisher, whose wood sculptures are on display at Little Gallery, puts literally thousands of hours into his large pieces. His hands bleed, his fingers are bone and skin without any fleshy undercoating. He becomes bitter when he remembers buyers who have offered him a few hundred dollars for these thousand-hour works.

To a piece, these wood sculptures are passionate, undulating, with strong force lines that reflect a man who finds warmth in his family relationships, but a cold world beyond.

FISHER GAVE UP TEACHING history at Wayne State University after 16 years to pursue a career as a sculptor.



"Mother of Doves" was carved from cocobolo wood.

"I got into it and it devoured me, but I found out who I was. It was the toughest decision of my life." He said he immediately faced rejection from friends and family and the questions of the skeptics about how he would support his family.

He considers himself a purist in his field. He uses the best materials available, does it all by hand and won't quit until the work is totally pleasing to him.

HE ORDERS COCOBULO WOOD from Africa, picks it up at the New York City docks, hauls it back here and wrestles to get it down the stairs to his studio.

In many instances, marble bases for the wood sculptures are an integral part of the piece.

"The Survivors," a commentary of World War III was done from a piece of Honduras rosewood combined with marble verde (green), which was salvaged from a remodeling project at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The rosewood was a 1,200-pound block when Fisher began. It now weighs about 100 pounds.

Wood color, marble color and the plays of highlights as well as form and texture contribute to the total effect.

One large sculpture, "Angel of Light" for instance, is cocobolo, which is an amber-red, and is mounted on a cylinder base of curly maple. Another of the same wood, "The Mother of Doves," is on a polished rectangle of Carrara marble.

He pointed out the tiny 3-million-years-old fossils in a base of yellow, sienna marble from Italy and the fiery reds in a sculptured piece of Brazilian tulipwood, and the carryover of the colors in the Carrara marble base.

These things excite him. The pull and tug or flow of line along with the hand-rubbed textures of his own work, creates a visible emotional response in the artist.

STILL, IN THE GALLERY full of his works, he will gravitate to "The Young Guitarist" because it is closest to an autobiographical statement. Made of cocobolo, the Greek lyre base began as a marble cover. The artist took the salvaged cast iron and worked and polished it into the base form.

"I'm after the eternal human feeling," he said. "I'm after the true feelings of love, honor and truth."

Within the metropolitan community, Fisher said his greatest cooperation



WALTER FISHER

and understanding has come from the workmen at Wolverine Marble, where he often goes to hunt for materials.

"I pay homage to these guys," he said.

As for the art community, buyers, artists themselves and those related, he has few good words. He feels unappreciated here and plans to move to the East Coast this summer.

"They talk about minimal art—my work is maximal art and I want to be well paid like any other man. I am just as much a professional as a doctor, lawyer or any other... My work has always sold well, but not enough to make a living."

Prices aren't marked on the pieces at Little Gallery, 915 E. Maple. The artist said the prices for the large ones "aren't as much as a Mercedes, but in the same class, and they will last as long as man is on earth."

Fisher has poured vast quantities of energy, time and creativity into his works. He would like to be appreciated in terms of it.



Olsavsky's layered acrylics are spontaneous, rather than planned.

Painter voices her satisfaction

STORY: CORRINE ABATT
PHOTOS: STEPHEN CANTRELL

It will be interesting to see Christine Olsavsky's next show. Her present one at Little Gallery, which runs through June 30, is her first commercial gallery show. She graduated a year ago from the Center for Creative Studies and has been accepted into the graduate school of Columbia University.

The 25-year-old painter sensed that immediately after graduation was too soon for a major show. She had not developed her own style sufficiently. She spent a year readying the present show, and she is satisfied that these are truly her images—with few ghosts of school paintings done to please an instructor.

SHE DROPPED out of the still life, realism syndrome several years back. Her large acrylics, the smallest is about four feet square, are abstracts—"lyrical abstractions" is the term Ms. Olsavsky prefers.

She works on the floor on unstretched, unprimed canvas, applying

and soaking up one wash after another—the same technique which watercolorists frequently use.

Her end result is a many layered, subtly colored abstract which is stretched last instead of first.

"I am very much involved in the process of painting," she said. "I am very much involved with spontaneous, creative activity."

She explained that her interest in Zen philosophy is in part responsible for her approach.

"I'm trying to make my painting as immediate as my life."

She said her emphasis is on the present, what is happening to her now, and in her art she likes to capitalize on what happens as she goes along. The idea of conceiving what you want to paint, doing a plan, a sketch or a drawing and proceeding from that as a guide, turns her off.

"I am interested in ambiguous situations. They allow for individual interpretation," she said.

Her careful analysis of herself as an evolving, young artist, is almost strange when contrasted with the spontaneous condition she places herself in when she begins to paint.

She knew she would have to move away from the two artists who had an influence upon her work—Hans Hoffman and Helen Frankenthaler or the artist whose work thrilled her and kindled her interest in painting, Monet.



CHRISTINE OLSAVSKY

She analyzed what has been happening to art in the last 10 years and said, "These 10 years have really prepared us for something in terms of a breakthrough. I'm not sure what it is, but I can feel it coming."

So far, she said, the only evidence of the breakthrough has been in the acceptance of combining more than one art form, music and painting or dance and painting or sculpture.

She showed her concern about being her own person in her art.

"I THINK ONE of the problems with young painters is that they should work through their influences rather than deny them."

She looked at her paintings in the show and said, "Any similarity now between me and Frankenthaler is only that we both work on the floor and use stains—we don't have the same images. This show is a year's efforts by myself."

She taught art at Bishop Gallagher High School and gave private lessons at the Grosse Pointe Institute of Music.

Her feelings about Detroit and the art community are positive.

"Detroit has an abundance of good artists and I'm pleased."

So, next September this promising talent will be off to New York City, but she plans to keep her ties with Detroit. She would like to have another show here and if things go as planned, she will.

Hills women head group

The Detroit Northwest Suburban Alumnae Club of Kappa Kappa Gamma elected three Farmington Hills women to office.

Mrs. Fred C. Toeticher, 29747 Fox Grove, is the organization's new president.

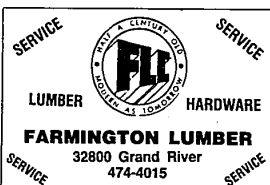
Mrs. David Parker, 31091 North

Park, is its secretary. Mrs. Douglas Edwards, of 36530 Lyman, Farmington, will be treasurer.

The alumnae club is a philanthropic organization which sponsors local charities, including the Detroit Baptist Children's Home, as well as national charities.



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