

# Folk art's prime ingredient is sincerity of expression

By CORINNE ABATT

Probably no artist exemplifies the heart and soul of folk art better than the late Clarence Hewes of Lansing.

The artist spent most of his working years in later life as an employee of the Lansing Board of Water and Light. He worked a night shift in an underground pumping station in the company of loud turbines. When his duties lagged, Hewes took to painting the walls and pillars of the station with colorful murals. He even decorated the daily log book with his cartoon-like drawings.

When C. Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell, curators of folk art at the Michigan State University museum and organizers of the folk art show now at Meadow Brook Gallery, spoke there recently, they described true folk artists as producing for a limited audience.

Hewes audience was, at least originally, limited to the handful of co-workers who found his bright, lively creations pleasant morale builders.

IN DRAWING distinctions between folk art and popular art, Dewhurst said. "A folk artist never really sets out to produce for a wide audience—a folk artist isn't audience-oriented."

When he decorated the envelopes of letters he wrote to his daughter in Arizona, Hewes was creating for an audience of one.

A display of these envelopes is in the show of 20th century Michigan folk art at the gallery. The murals that remain are still in the underground-pumping station in Lansing.

Another story which Ms. MacDowell told illustrates the same theme, creating for an audience of one. John Young of East Lansing, sometime billboard and theater backdrop painter, decided when his wife became bedridden to make bright, moveable wind machines to place outside her window for her to look at and enjoy. His yard is often filled with these wind machines with their gaily painted rudders and articulated figures. A particularly elaborate one is in the Meadow Brook Gallery show.

Dewhurst said that when he and Ms. MacDowell went looking for local folk artists, "We were looking for folk art that tells us something about the experience of living in Michigan."

As they found the artists, talked with them and taped the interviews, patterns began to emerge.

ONE GROUP was carrying on a tradition, passed down from one generation to the next. Alice Bennett who has preserved the Chippewa Indian techniques of making strawberry baskets from black ash splints falls into this group. So do father and son, Stan and Glen VanAntwerp who carve intricate fans and designs from a single block of cedar without glue or other adhesive material.

On a trip to Sweden the curators discovered this particular art form had come to Sweden from Russian soldiers who brought it from their cultural traditions.

Another group are those artists like Hewes and Young who create for a limited audience, explaining and exploring their internal feelings.

Some folk artists produce for a wider audience (still limited by popular standards) but refuse to change their style and approach.

For a fourth group, the art is a testament of something that means something to the person creating—a personal statement.

"It is something that came out of his own idea, something he wanted to do," said Ms. MacDowell.

Among her examples were the pop bottle house in Kaleva made by John Jacob Makinen. This man who died in 1942 owned and operated the North Western Bottling Works. He laid some 60,000 bottles in masonry, bottom out for a smooth surface. He spelled out the words happy home on the front and included designs on the sides. The home which Makinen never had a chance to live in is now in danger of making way for road improvements.

PAUL DOMKE's garden and prehistorical zoo in Oskineke is testament to one man's desire to create. The zoo includes a large selection of dinosaurs which Domke researched and then

made using a concrete foundation, steel framework which he covered with cement and other materials.

The curators said that folk art has appeal and is collected for several reasons.

"The American public collects folk art for its aesthetic art values," Dewhurst said. He compared the appeal of African and Oceanic art to American folk art.

"THE SOCIAL SCIENCE community an historical document," Ms. MacDowell said.

looks at folk art for its cultural implications and historians read folk art as All three groups are now paying more attention to folk art and a fourth emerging group is beginning to collect folk art as a popular culture.

Thursday, February 1, 1979

(F111B)

## Many uses of herbs told in FCC class

A six session class with an authority on growing and using herbs begins at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2 in Farmington Community Center.

"The Magic of Herbs" will explore the history of herbs, the spice trade, and then show the many ways herbs can be used for flavor in cooking, for fragrance in potpourri and pomanders, for crafts, and for medicinal purposes.

Carolyn Jamison, a graduate of Ohio State University, is herb consultant for the Detroit Garden Center. She has planted the herb gardens at Cranbrook, and has lectured and served herb luncheons to groups for the past ten years.

Class participants will learn about garden design and growing methods for herbs. They will also see samples of herb wreaths and pressed flower pictures for those who enjoy crafts.

Herb luncheons have always been popular special events given by Mrs. Jamison in cooperation with Farmington Community Center.

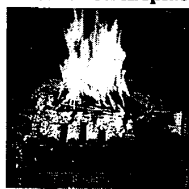
Her next luncheon for the center, called "Taste What Herbs and Spices Can Do," is part of the "Entertaining With a Flair Series," set for Feb. 14.

Registration for the class and reservations for the lunch are necessary and can be made by calling the center, 477-8404.

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## Communities have their day with the Detroit Symphony

On Friday, Feb. 16, the communities of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Westland, Livonia, Plymouth and Northville will be honored by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at the morning Coffee Concert.



The "Community Day" is one in a series of reach-out programs organized to attract larger audiences from the metropolitan area suburbs. The special day is sponsored by the symphony in conjunction with National Bank of Detroit (NBD) and Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

One of the highlights of the concert is that the spotlight falls on those symphony members who are residents of the communities being honored.

The \$8 package includes transportation by bus and the concert. Those who choose to stay for lunch at the Detroit Plaza may purchase a package ticket for \$15.

Charter buses will leave about 9:15 a.m. from Kendallwood Shopping Center, Twelve Mile and Farmington Road; Livonia Mall, Seven Mile and Middlebelt; and Westland Mall, at Warren and Wayne.

Barbara Diles, group sales manager for the symphony, thinks of Community Days as an introduction for groups who wish to attend any of the symphony's performances.

"IF YOUR GROUP can fill up a bus I can make any kind of arrangements you wish with a lot of options," she said, "whether it is for one of the orchestra's evening performances, a Friday morning coffee concert, Sunday afternoon Krege Family Concert or a Weekend Pops."

"There is a perfect entertainment package for everyone."

One of the next big ones on the

orchestra's calendar is the Opera/Ballet Festival in the spring.



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