

Artist tries to capture sitter's soul on canvas

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Light from the outside softly filters into the small second floor studio as Jerinne Habsburg pads around the wooden floors. There is a cigarette in her hand and white slippers on her black stockings feet.

Standing in front of her most recent endeavor, the artist stares at her work. It is a portrait commissioned by former colleagues of a man who died several years ago. She is working from a black and white photo of the man which obviously was taken at a business awards luncheon. It has the stiff awkward look of a photo taken in a hurry.

"I'm trying to give him some dignity. He was well liked by people, I'm told," she says, still studying the unfinished portrait of a thin man with bright eyes and a large smile.

Ms. Habsburg and the portrait are in the midst of the clutter that fills her corner of the Garret Gallery in Farmington.

And in trying to give the elderly gentleman dignity, she is practicing her craft in a manner she believes is fitting.

She is viewing her surroundings with an artist's selectivity and recording her reactions.

"I LIKE TO GET spontaneous portraits. I don't like portraits to get over-worked and I don't like them to look photographic."

"A camera sees without discrimination. I see with discrimination. If I paint to make the portrait look like a photo the painting would look frozen," she said.

After with her subject and watching the person talk, laugh and move, Ms. Habsburg sits before her easel and chooses certain attitudes to portray in the picture.

"It's asking a bit much for perfection in the photographic sense," she said.

When she's told her work doesn't look like the sitter, she's willing to change certain portrait features.

"I'm not divine. If someone's unhappy I'm more than willing to do something about it. People have to be happy when they walk out of here."

Helping her to keep her humor about complaints is her favorite quote from



Pastels are one of the types of painting materials Mrs. Habsburg uses to produce her portraits. This one is of a four-year-old.

early 20th century artist John Singer Sargent: "There's always a portrait of somebody with something wrong with the mouth."

Beyond considering the little details which draw criticism, an artist should bring out the sitter's character.

IN MS. HABSBERG'S estimation, Thomas Eakins was a master at bringing out a person's soul in a portrait. In Eakins' portrait of his wife, he does more than just paint a mirror image of the average-looking woman, according to Ms. Habsburg.

"It's the most marvelous, insightful portrait I've seen. He brought out her soul."

Modern portraits tend to be dryly factual and approach architectural studies of the face, according to Ms. Habsburg.

Andrew Wyeth tends to paint a person by focusing attention on the lines and planes of the face, she said.

"He paints a person like he paints a barn. You don't see the face glorified."

"It's almost like a factual report," she said.

Wyeth tends to paint a record of what time has done to the face, she contends.

Ms. Habsburg spends most of the time in her studio trying to capture that elusive quality called character on canvas.

DRESSED IN BLACK SLACKS AND a dark print blouse which matches her dark wavy hairy worn short and off the face, Ms. Habsburg turns out about one portrait every 11 days. But she counts her 30 years experience as time spent in every portrait she paints.

She started out at 17 as a student in a Boston art school painting from human models five days a week. She moved to the New York Art Students' League until she married her husband Stefan.

After four of her five children were born, she decided to pick up art again and began attending classes.

She found it difficult to forget her art training and concentrate slowly on housekeeping after her children began to grow up. The conflict between using a skill and devoting time to housework was a "dickens of a thing to resolve," she said.

"If you drop out, you don't lose anything but you don't gain anything."

"In art you can reasonably take up where you left off," she added.

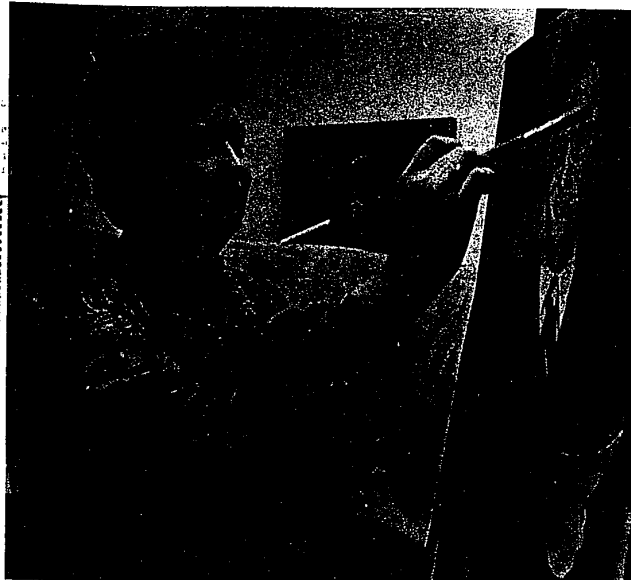
But art changes, too. Critical reactions take new turns, and styles change. The artist who steps back from the mainstream misses the tempo of these changes.

THREE YEARS AGO when she was asked to join Garret Gallery, she "jumped at the chance." Now, she finds the time to spread her wings and try other forms of painting. Still-life painting occupies part of her time.

A collection of her still-lives will be on view from Feb. 9-11 at Shenandoah Country Club, 5500 Walnut Lake Rd., between Farmington Road and Drake in West Bloomfield. Her work will be among that of 150 of Michigan's artists exhibiting for Sholem Aleichem Institute's 16th annual art show and sale.

Her watercolor landscapes and flowers show her yearning for realism. While she personally enjoys abstract art, she realizes her skills lie with a realistic approach.

"I firmly believe realism will always be with us. There is a place for both styles," she says.



Jerinne Habsburg puts the final touches on a portrait of the late Judge Clarence Reid as she perfects her art in the Farmington Garrett Gallery. (Staff photo)

A variety of moods, from gay to somber, are scattered throughout Mrs. Habsburg's paintings. This is a portrait of her daughter, Tantzil.



Photos by
Allen
Schlossberg

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

SAY HELLO TO TAFFY. Farmington's newest resident. She lives in the habitrail set up in the children's room of the Farmington Library on Liberty. The baby hamster was named by Donald Hurley, who entered the library's "Name Our Hamster" contest. Hurley was among more than 80 fifth and sixth graders who entered the contest. Taffy, a gift from Farmington veterinarian Dr. John Richardson is enjoying life among the bookshelves. So far, she's managed to escape twice from her habitrail. Not bad for a sprightly, 12-week-old teddy bear hamster. Angles hears she was just browsing.

PERSONS WHO FEEL the need for that extra bit of protection can buy a shriek alarm at the Farmington and Farmington Hills city halls and at Mercy Center, Eleven Mile near Middlebelt.

SPORTS FANS can support the North Farmington girls' softball team by purchasing a Gillette men's or women's travel kit for \$3.50. The fund raiser is conducted from Feb. 9-13. The kits can be ordered by calling 626-2511 or any team member. The money they raise will be used to purchase a softball pitching machine and other necessary equipment for the team.

A TIP OF THE ANGLES' topper and an elaborate how to Boy Scout Troop 283 of Farmington Hills for receiving Eagle Scout awards recently.

The recipients are: Richard A. Brewer, Donald N. Grochan, John Gunderson, Erik T. Koepflin and Raymond L. Smith.

SINGERS WHO WANT to raise their voices with others can join the Kendall Lark Chorus. Women who want to join the group can attend a rehearsal. Rehearsals are conducted on the first three Tuesdays of each month at 8 p.m. in the North Farmington Baptist Church, Thirteen Mile between Orchard Lake and Farmington Roads. Women must be more than 18 years old. For further information, call Sue McLean at 349-2186 or Sara Woodard at 553-0182.

THE FARMINGTON AREA Association of Retired School Personnel will meet at 11:45 a.m. Feb. 18 at Ten Mile Community School.

FARMINGTON'S OWN Sharette Family has recorded their first album featuring such selections as "You are the Sunshine of My Life," "We're All Alone," "Send in the Clowns" and "If We Only Have Love." The album is available at the Harmony House Records in the Downtown Farmington Center, PISCAR Electronics, 12201 Morang, Detroit and by mail from 86880 Roschill, Farmington 48018. The album is \$7.

SECTION 36 HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION will meet at 8 p.m., Feb. 8 in St. Alexander's Social Hall. Earl Oppertausser will discuss the Senior Citizens Housing Bond issue.

Terry Seaver, a member of the ad hoc committee to study funding for projects in Section 36, will ask questions on area improvements.

THE ASSOCIATION for Retarded Citizens in Oakland County will conduct its 1979 awards dinner at 4 p.m. Feb. 25 at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. The ARC will present several awards to volunteers and other persons and organizations that have helped to improve the quality of life for mentally retarded citizens in Oakland County. Tickets for the awards dinner are \$12.50 per person and can be obtained by calling the ARC office at 645-4522.

THE FARMINGTON UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH is sponsoring a record hop from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Feb. 10 in the church on Halsted near Grand River. Records of the big bands will be played. Admission is \$5. For reservations, call 474-6823.

THE SEARCH IS ON for low income families in Oakland County who have trouble paying last year's winter energy bills. The Oakland Livingstone Human Service Agency has received \$106,000 from the federal government to help pay utility bills, provide emergency shelter, make emergency home repairs and buy fuel oil or firewood, according to Ron Marabate, Project Operations Department Head for OLHSA.

Money obtained through the program doesn't have to be repaid. Marabate estimates that the funds will serve 450 families. The money must be expended by March 15. Acceptable income levels are: \$7,750 for a non-farm family of four whose head is less than 60 years old; \$9,300 for a non-farm family of four whose head is at least 60 years old; \$8,240 for a couple more than 60 years old. There are special qualifications for the handicapped. Persons who think they might be eligible for the program should call Project Warmth at 373-7767.

DEADLINE

Material submitted for the Inside Angles, 22170 Nine Mile, Southfield 48034, should include the name and phone number of the sender and should be typewritten. Items should be received at least one week before publication and photographs can't be used. All materials become the property of the Farmington Observer.

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For your up-to-date sweetie: An ever-so-small heart shaped address book with her good buddy Snoopy, \$9.

For your darling gadabout: A loveable Snoopy tote bag that can easily handle her roughest day in style, \$4.

For your budding romantic: A golden jewelry set, so delicate, so sweet with heart shaped earrings and pendant, \$4.

For your old-fashioned girl: A pink mirror box with heart topped necklace, bracelet and ring, \$5.

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