

# Southfield artist thinks big—but works small

By DIANE ABRAMS

When Steve Grant of Southfield decided to move on to bigger things, his artistic endeavors became smaller.

The contemplative artist uses pen and ink to create miniature drawings and images. With technical



S. GRANT

drafting pens and special equipment, Grant produces abstract pieces that probe the minds of his viewers.

"A lot of people try to attach specific meaning to my work, but most of it is done without any particular message in mind," said Grant. "I don't want to portray simple messages, what I strive to do is emit certain feelings and emotional responses."

The tiny colored drawings are frequently divided into separate squares containing individual illustrations or designs. As many as 16 squares, or as few as three, are filled with precisely shaped, mechanical elements.

"I use single square units to compose a larger picture," said Grant. "Each square is independent to a degree, but they must also be interdependent."

MANY OF THE images Grant has created are repeated throughout his work; tiny circles that appear as luminous bubbles can be found in several pieces. An unfolding bud, that can also be interpreted as a seashell, also appears in more than a few of the drawings.

"My work is always evolving. I'm continually expanding upon the individual elements," said Grant. "I think I cover the spectrum of my medium. I frequently go back and re-do things."

Grant also incorporates biological aspects of his work. An expressive eye appears in one square, isolated from diminutive abstract figures found in another unit.

The backgrounds of these unusual pieces are predominantly black. Darkness adds a new dimension to the work, giving the drawings depth. The surrealistic world Grant creates brings thoughts of Salvador Dali to mind. However, unlike the art of Dali, Grant's pieces contain a gentle quality that encompass an aura of animated fantasy.

"There's a best size to every aspect of this medium," said Grant. "Since I implement a lot of solid black areas, I think that if things became too much bigger they would lose their cuteness and become too powerful for what I want to convey."

However, Grant is aware that his work is subject to varying interpretations.

"The surrealistic element is not as attractive to most people as other motifs," he said. "It (surrealism) makes them think and most people don't want to think."

If people are conditioned to expect certain aesthetic qualities from art, then it's the fault of critics who refuse to acknowledge new styles and innovations, according to Grant.

"If I were a critic I would encourage people to see things that I didn't like, as well as the things that I did like," he said. "We always have to realize that we may not understand everything. Drawing conclusions is a dangerous thing."

A drawing Grant did a few years ago proves that the thoughtful artist practices what he preaches.

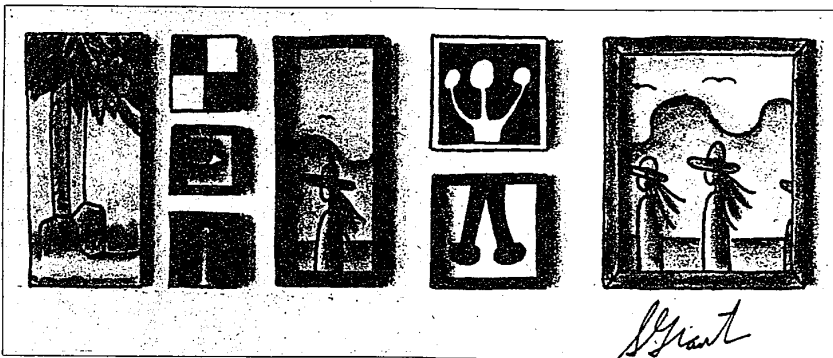
"I took all the color combinations that I don't like and put them together in one piece," he said. "I surprised myself by really liking the results. It looks kind of like a tapestry with intricate woven designs."

Since he was a child, Grant had an appreciation of the diverse things that can be done with pen and ink. Although he didn't utilize sophisticated equipment until the '70s, he began creating his artistic world much sooner.

"As a kid, I used whatever equipment was laying around. All I really needed was a piece of paper and a pen to keep me happy," he said. "When my brother bought me my first colored pencil set, I started taking art more seriously."

WHERE GRANT ONCE thought three days was a long time to spend on one piece, he now spends at least 10 days or more on a drawing.

Reflecting on previous endeavors, he amuses himself while studying



Artist Stephen Grant executes small, precise works. (Staff photos by Mindy Saunders)

what he calls his primitive work. These drawings were done free-hand, a number of years ago. The microscopic details reveal an unusually steady hand. Since his first art show in 1972, Grant has implemented a variety of technical devices in his work.

"I try to take people into other realities when I draw," he said. "I've found that people don't always like to think of new realities, though. They have a hard enough time with this one."

Grant's own perception of reality

has gone through some changes over the years. In high school he thought he wanted to be an architect. Recognizing his ability to draw, he chose to study architecture because it was something he could go to school for, as opposed to simple pleasure drawing.

"I found out quickly that I was a lousy architect. I got bored thinking about how to get doors open," said Grant. "As an artist, you don't have to be very practical."

As an avid traveler, Grant has

been exposed to a variety of different lifestyles and he finds these experiences inspirational in his work.

"I've lived in Australia, Asia and throughout parts of Europe for a few years," he said. "I think I've been in every gallery in Europe, but I've never seen any art like mine. I'm influenced by a lot of art, though. And I've recently started drawing from life, there's a certain element of impressionism involved."

Grant's work is on display through November at the Bloom-

field Township Library. The 19-piece exhibition introduces artistic optical effects and a new concept in the world of art. Grant encourages anyone who's interested in his work to call him at 568-0977.

Although Grant believes most people consider art a frivolity, he has found great satisfaction as an artist.

"I have a great spirit in terms of my own discipline," he said. "Life is so full of pain and sorrow, it's important to balance it out with things that you like."

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