

Scarab Club exhibit May 11-18

Women painters and sculptors together since 1903

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: STEPHEN CANTRELL

Not too many women's groups have survived non-stop for 77 years. So, the question put to members of the Detroit Society of Women Painters and Sculptors is what held it together since 1903.

That's when it was founded by Lillian Burk Messer to bring together women artists who had studied with great names to help aspiring women artists.

The original idea has been modified somewhat, but the society is basically as strong, if not stronger, than ever before. Proof of that is the coming annual exhibition of works by the 110 active members May 11-18 at the Scarab Club, 217 Farnsworth, Detroit.

Robert Wilbert, head of the art department at Wayne State University, has selected the paintings and sculpture for the show.

Eve Szilagi of Bloomfield Hills, former president and presently a member of the society's board of directors said, "Women's groups like this are very important to me. Women are more supportive of each other now than they used to be. Even though we like our lives as far as our families are concerned, we need these creative outlets."

In many ways, her story of her career as an artist runs parallel to the other members of the society.

She runs a busy home. Her husband, Emerick, is a physician, two daughters, Chris and Marti, are college students, and teaches art several days a week in her studio and at Pontiac Art Center

and tries to spend at least two full days a week on her own painting.

"I could teach everyday," she said. "I love to teach. I learn so much from my students. I also feel it's important to continue studying."

So, Mrs. Szilagi who is considered a fine professional artist by her peers continues to take classes, presently from Russell Keeler at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association. Over the years she has taken lessons or classes with Richard Kezlow, Glen Michaels, Huey Lee Smith and Morris Brose, among many other well recognized area artists.

Mrs. Szilagi studied to be a professional singer at New England Conservatory. Surgery on her throat damaged her vocal quality and she switched to art and completed her degree at Art Center College of Design in California. During World War II, she was in the WAVES as a control tower operator.

In her professional career as a painter, Mrs. Szilagi concentrates heavily on portraits, flowers, and fruit. The majority of these are done in oils although she also paints and in and teaches watercolor.

As she put a painting of single peonies on the easel in her home, one that she entered in the Scarab Club exhibition, she said, "I like to try to get the movement and rhythm of a particular subject. Flowers are always stirring."

Although she has many requests, she only does three to five portrait commissions a year. She prefers to choose her subjects and do the portraits she likes. And these are all done through sittings.

"The presence of the person is so important to me," she said. "A photograph is an immediate image of how the person is at that time. When the person sits for a portrait, many facets of the person are exposed. It takes five or six sittings. It varies. Some people hide more than others."

Not wishing to belittle those who paint from photographs, she said quickly, "Working from photographs is a specific art in itself. It's difficult to get a life image from photographs."

The pressures of doing commission portraits can bother her.

"You have to keep the sitter entertained. You want to please them and you want to say what you want to say."

These pressures, she explained, can present difficulties. She spoke of a psychic response to the subject and "something that comes through that you can't help."

She can also tell stories of almost completing a portrait and then suddenly finding something in her subject that she hadn't seen before.

In one such instance, like John Singer Sargent, she put the almost completed portrait aside and began again to catch

a wry sense of humor that hadn't surfaced until the final sitting.

It was in the 1960s when Mrs. Szilagi was president of the Detroit Society of Women Painters and Sculptors that the concept of the organization began to change.

"It became more of a professional organization," she said. "New members have to have been in a number of juried shows and have three sponsors. Entry is by invitation only. We now have 110 members, 12 associates and 10 out of state."

Members come from all over the

metropolitan area. Among those from this area are: Mary Ashcroft, Esther Bacon, Kathleen Birch, Joyce Brown, Karen Carter, Maryann Childs, Bertha Cohen, Janet Courtney, Gladys Dibble, Gladys Kaldor, Iris Kaufman, Margaret Lyman Kelleher, Jane Kilgour, Peggy Klarr, Olivette Moore, and Sally Parsons.

Others are Clarice Percoc, Mae Averill Reba Pintzuk, Sally Robinson, Peggy Sayed, Assunta Sera, Virginia Sheppard, Reva Shwayder, Katherine Snider, Meredith Stieritt, and Idell Weisberg.

Brazilian guitarist here for 2 concerts

Rick Bonfim, a Brazilian guitarist and singer who has been performing for the past 15 years throughout the world, will give two concerts here sponsored by Clarenceville United Methodist Church.

Both performances are free, and both begin at 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, May 17-18, in the church at 20300 Middlebelt.

During his stay in the Detroit area, Bonfim will be the weekend guest of the congregation.

He will also be performing for the Sunday morning worship services at 8:45 and 11:15 a.m. and will give a special program for the church youth at 10 a.m.

Cynthia J. Kage, director of religious education for Clarenceville said, "Rick

makes use of music, speech and media in his unique performance."

"The use of large screens, projectors, excellent photography on the beauty of the earth, the life of Christ and the youth of today combines to bring an evening which will remain in hearts for a long time."

Bonfim is a graduate of Valosta State College where he majored in psychology. He holds a masters degree in divinity and journalism from Emory University and a masters of speech communications from University of Georgia.

His father, the Rev. Daniel Bonfim, is Brazil's first national evangelist after spending 33 years in local ministry.

The Saturday evening concert will be preceded by a 5:30 p.m. spaghetti dinner in the church that is open to guests.

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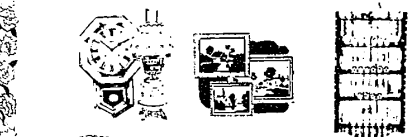
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