

# Travelers open door to cultural exchanges

BY CORINNE ABATT

Through the efforts of a lot of people, Mitchell Kafarski of Bloomfield Hills for one, closer links are being established between the Detroit Institute of Arts and the museums, artists and art experts of Poland.

Kafarski and his wife, Zofia, have long supported Polish cultural events in the metropolitan area, although this is far from the limit of their volunteer commitments.

Polish culture, happens to be very close to their hearts and they do everything possible to further its influence.

Mrs. Kafarski was born and lived in Poland until she defected and came to the United States. He represented the White House for the Polish-American community at the opening of the first U.S. Trade Center in Warsaw in 1972 and is president and chairwoman of the board of Aestron Inc., a company that deals in chemical and specialized coatings. He is a veteran world traveler, avid mountain climber and speaks three languages.

Kafarski and Fred Cummings, director of the DIA, made a trip to Poland last fall, Cummings to become better acquainted with contemporary and historical art at historical Polish art and Kafarski, acting as a kind of facilitator for the tightly scheduled 10-day visit.

One of the highlights of that trip which took them to Lodz, Krakow, Warsaw and Poznan as well as many smaller cities, was a visit with Magdalena Abakanowicz, sculptural weaver. She was in Detroit briefly last February (partially as a result of their visit) to give a talk at the DIA and to open an exhibit of several of her fiber pieces.

The DIA bought one of her fiber heads, "Ovid," and was given another, "Abakan," by Jack Lemor Larson. Mary Jane Jacobs, painting and sculpture curator at the DIA, is now working on a major Abakanowicz exhibition for the summer of 1982.

"She is really the leading person among fiber artists in the world today," Ms. Jacobs said of Ms. Abakanowicz. When the Polish weaver gave a lecture at the Detroit Institute of Arts

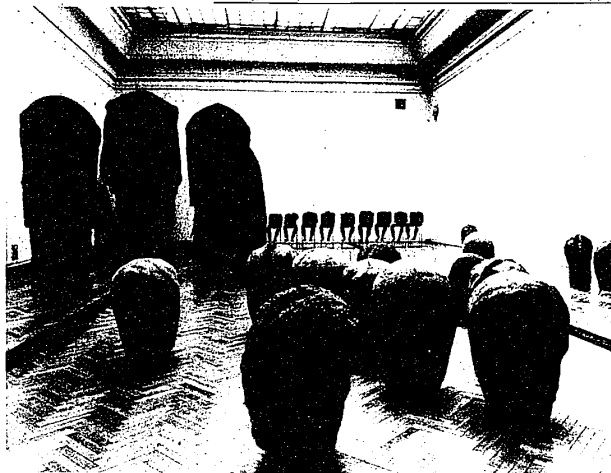
last February (she was the Kafarski's houseguest), even the standing room was completely taken. Ms. Jacobs is presently working on a catalog for the Abakanowicz exhibition.

"It will really be the major statement on her work," she said, "an important monograph and an important document."

Ms. Jacobs will go to Poland in July to continue work on the catalog. She recalled the first time she visited the artist's studio, "I was knocked over with her work."

Alan Darr of the European art department at the Detroit Institute of Arts said no firm plans have yet been made for a loan of art from Poland, but "we are considering the possibilities for future exhibitions."

Kafarski said he considered the trip a highly worthwhile experience. He expected to be warmly greeted, but was overwhelmed by the reception which they were given. The first long-range effect of that visit is the establishment of closer ties with Ms. Abakanowicz, a major figure in contemporary art.



Examples of Magdalena Abakanowicz's fiber works are shown in an exhibit of three subjects. In the foreground are beads done from 1973-75, at left

are black garments done in 1974 and in the background is a row of seated figures done in 1974-75.

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