

Scrap wood that started to pile up on Eileen Aboulafia's work table, left from building canvas stretchers, turned the artist's attention to old wood as an art form. Her wood assemblages are put together in a

spacious workroom-studio she has partitioned off in an old Farmington warehouse. Her work is being shown publicly for the first time this month in Troy Art Gallery.

## Eileen Aboulafia

# Artist gives old wood new life

By LORAIN McCLISH

Hammer, nails, glue, paint and old wood with unusual grains and textures are the tools of artist Eileen Aboulafia, whose assemblages are on exhibit in Troy Art Gallery.

It is the first one-woman show for the Farmington Hills woman, who hammers and paints in a smock stiff with stain in a Farmington warehouse that was once a winery.

Her creations are an outgrowth of the abstract expression school of art she once depicted on canvas that transferred itself to collage, and most recently spread to the unusual three-dimensional pieces she shows this month.

Mrs. Aboulafia describes her art as "pieces of my life-growing, an evolution from the time I started cutting holes in the canvas, gluing it back,

building it up, layering it, adding found objects."

Growing up as the daughter of a carpenter, she said she has always felt a deep appreciation for the beauty and texture of wood.

HER WOOD assemblages today come from old wood.

A ladder that has formed a patina from 30 years of paint drippings, an antique desk drawer, slats taken from boarded-up windows, discarded crates with the shipping address in tact — all are grist for the artist's mill.

Each of the objects chosen to be brought back to her spacious studio are selected because of an unusually-shaped knothole, or a split that intrigues her, the way it has weathered

Then with stain and paint, maybe some nuts and bolts, the artist begins her jigsaw puzzle that finds completion, "when it feels just right," she said.

"A kind of magic happens," she says of her work. "The composition works as a visual piece and the old wood takes on a new life."

"No piece is premeditated. The pieces take on a life of their own and lead me, one piece building on the next almost happening by itself. The piece takes over and I lose control."

The process is much the same as in abstract expressionism, where the first brush stroke is the impetus for the entire painting, and each stroke thereafter dictates the next.

MRS. ABLOULAFIA is a native of Detroit who studied at Cranbrook, Oakland and Wayne State universities. She worked for a while as a fashion

illustrator, but when that work proved too constraining, she went back to school to earn her bachelor of fine arts degree from Center for Creative Studies. Her purpose, she said, "was to learn how to use every media possible."

She has enjoyed success as an accomplished painter with figurative pieces, handled for the most part through Rubine Gallery.

"It wasn't until early last year that I started playing, toying really, with wood scraps. Little pieces left over from building (canvas) stretchers started piling up on my work table and pretty soon they were taking shape," she said.

"The wood tells me what color to use on it," she said, pointing to one assemblage that appeared to be totally different colors depending from what angle the piece was viewed.

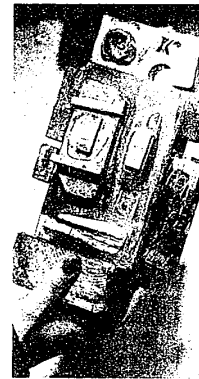
Sometimes she will split a piece of wood to make a line, as in a drawing. Sometimes a grain will be enhanced to the point where it seems to shimmer with light and life.

"I HAVE ALWAYS found beauty in old things," Mrs. Aboulafia said. "I guess that's part of being an artist."

"And all of these pieces, a worn mop handle, baseboards from an old house, furniture crates, they're all part of our everyday environment, aren't they?"

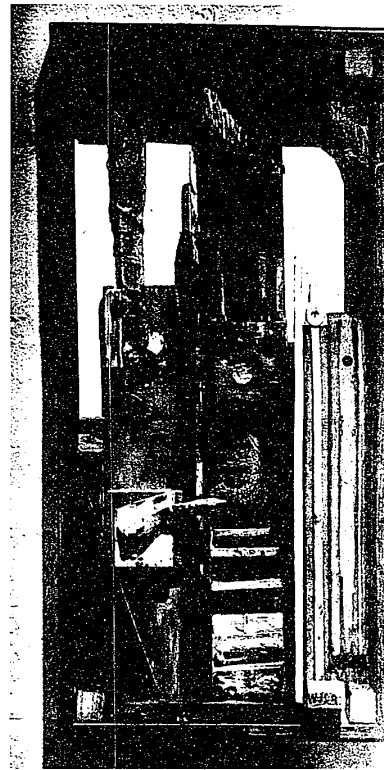
She was approached by the owners of Troy Art Gallery to show her assemblages there for the show that will remain through March 28.

The gallery is at 755 W. Big Beaver, near I-75, Top of Troy Concourse. Gallery hours are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.



None of the artist's wood assemblages are premeditated. She begins with one piece, then builds from that with other pieces of discarded wood and found objects that compliment one another.

Staff photos by Randy Borst



Pieces and parts of weathered and used wood in any form may be left as is, may be enhanced with paint and stain, may even be torn apart and put together again to create an assemblage.



Some of Eileen Aboulafia's wood assemblages in Troy Art Gallery this week are as tall as the artist. Some are small enough to be held in one's hand.

## Problem solving help available in all-day seminar for women

WomenCenter of Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland Community College, will sponsor a seminar with six workshops called "Problem Solving for Working Women" from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, March 21, on the campus in Farmington Hills.

The keynote address called "Working Women's Problems in the '80s" will be given by Joyce Kornbluh, director of Women & Work in the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations.

Luncheon speaker is Marley Weiss, assistant general counsel for United Auto Workers. Her topic is "Equal Pay

for Work of Equal Value." Brochures and registration forms will be sent on request by calling the college, 476-9400, ext. 509. Fee for all activities through the day, including lunch, is \$18.

PARTICIPANTS will have a choice of one of four workshops in the morning and two of six workshops in the afternoon.

The workshop called "Ways to Resolve Conflict" tells how to gain winning decisions through various processes, including teamwork. "Alternative Employment Patterns"

gives help for those involved in flexible time, part-time or self-employment.

"Promotion Strategies" concerns ladderizing, leap-frogging and juggling pragmatically in one's career.

"Personal Dynamics on the Job" deals with interrelating positively and dealing with negatives such as sexual and gender harassment.

"Empowering the Union Woman" involves building leadership on the job, and in particular in the union.

"Perks & Bennis: Your Hidden Salary" helps the employee look at benefits before leaping into a new company or new career.

## Psychologist focuses on harmony for family in lecture, workshop

Dr. Manfred Sonestegard, author of "Living in Harmony With Our Children," comes to Harrison High School for a lecture, followed by a workshop, in sessions sponsored by Farmington Youth Assistance in cooperation with Alfred Adler Institute of Southeastern Michigan.

Dr. Sonestegard's lecture begins at 8 p.m. Friday, March 13. His talk, called "Clues to Cooperative Children," is addressed to parents, educators and counselors.

Admission is \$2.50, asked at the door. On Saturday, March 14, the psychologist will conduct a unique all-day work-

shop. In front of an audience, he will counsel two families. One family will have adolescents; the other, younger children.

Reservations are requested for those who wish to attend the workshops by calling Dennis Skowronski, 342-9211.

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