

Artists Series ends season of delights

By Patricia Beach Smith
special writer

Ernest Bloch — and friends — provided an exhilarating finish to the American Artists Series for 1983 Sunday at Kingswood School, Cranbrook.

Bloch's Quartet for piano and strings might not have been a cup of tea for everyone in the audience, but there was no denying its impact, like it or not.

In the capable hands of performers Joani Freeman, piano; violinists, Linda Sooden Smith and Ronald Fischer; violist, Hart Holman, and John Thurman, cello, this stirring work's breadth and techniques and composition were masterfully handled.

The dissonances created in the first movement by the quartet, in the strings, helped the piece maintain a stirring, grand and purposeful mood. The second movement was, true to its markings, mystical and frightening.

THE THIRD movement seemed to jump from the gloom of the second movement to a springlike atmosphere through an intense and driving experience. The difficulty of the piece probably accounts for its never having been played in the Detroit area before.

Only first-rate players such as the ones doing the honors Sunday could have handled the outer reaches of their instruments' capabilities so admirably.

Cranbrook's brilliant and impassioned Quartet in G minor, Opus 25, finished the concert with spritely playing and all the color and nuance this composer can muster.

The grandeur created by only four instruments, in this case piano, violin, viola and cello, was amazing. The first movement, in comparison with the second, was rather bland — the flowing and elegant

melodies of the Intermezzo second movement were hard to beat. Bloch's brilliant orchestration and broad melodic line was expressed beautifully by the players in the second movement, but the third movement was hands down with its incredibly difficult and breathless conclusion.

Again the talents of the performers were imperative to accomplishing what the composer intended. The whirling dervish of a final movement finished the season, literally, on a splendid note.

The virtuosity of flautist Ervin Monroe was displayed well in two works that added to the program considerably — Johann Hummel's Adagio, Variations and Rondo on a Russian Theme and Albert Roussel's Narrative Trio.

IN THE FIRST piece, Monroe teamed with Freeman and cellist Thurman in a lively and engaging performance.

The only thing which slightly flawed the playing was the overshadowing of the other two instruments by the piano — a fault of the Kingswood auditorium which favors the largest instrument. The Hummel piece was shown to be a melodramatic, interestingly voiced composition which only sometimes was bogged down by arduous tempo.

In contrast, the Roussel Trio gave everyone a chance to show off in a talkative, informative manner. This work is a nice combination of classical and contemporary musical form and function which the performers appeared to enjoy — and play superbly.

The final program of the American Artists Series is always a harbinger of spring, but this season it was also the best way to make it through a rather dull, winter. Even though the weather outside wasn't "frigid," inside the music was so delightful.

Piloting an art form from a helicopter

By Carmina Brooks
special writer

Not long ago two art connoisseurs stood before a piece of work titled "Snow Shadows." One said to the other, "This painting is all wrong. The shadows couldn't have possibly been like that, and whoever did that painting didn't know what they were doing."

The artist was listening. He smiled. The critic was wrong. They weren't viewing a painting. The artist, Dale Fisher, knew exactly what he was doing when he photographed the delicate tracings of a maple tree and its shadow against windswept show-sculptured earth from a helicopter.

Fisher, an Ann Arbor native, is pioneering an artform called heliography. His camera and his helicopter have introduced a new magic to photography that has taken it beyond the current state of the art.

Fisher and his helicopter will be in Franklin Village on Saturday, from noon to 4 p.m., when Alley Arts and Antiques hosts a month-long showing of 60 pieces of Fisher's work. The public is invited.

THE FRANKLIN Gallery opened less than a year ago in an historic Village building at the northeast corner of 14 Mile and Franklin roads. Owner Barry Swormstedt said his gallery will handle Fisher's work exclusively in the metro area.

It was "Snow Shadows" that first attracted Swormstedt to Fisher's work, he said. He could not tell if it was a drawing, a painting, or a photograph. When the Renaissance Gallery closed in downtown Detroit, Swormstedt ac-

quired Fisher's work for his Franklin gallery.

Fisher's art is always done from the helicopter using a very special camera. His subjects are mostly nature, animals or marine scenery. People are involved only when they are integrated into the larger setting.

"Photographic art has not really been accepted by the public," Fisher said. "My ultimate aim is to make a contribution to photography as an art form."

Fisher said his helicopter puts him in a dimension that hasn't been experienced by most people.

"It is a place 25 to 300 feet off the ground that most people just pass through, but don't spend any time there — unless they are looking out of an office window."

"For me, it is the last frontier. I find new things every time I fly. Everything is familiar, but the point of view, the perspective is different."

Results are sometimes "really baffling" even to him, Fisher said. He described his success with a photo of a winter farm. There were fiddler shacks in the foreground, a farmhouse and barn in the background, extreme depth, and many miles away there were trees.

"EVERYTHING IS absolute depth of field, traveling at 90 miles an hour, taken at 2,500 ft of a second at F-2."

"I really don't know how it works," he continued. "When I jog, I watch myself run from above. My sight is down. My visual perception is not from the point where I am, but where I was. I don't want to explain that because I don't want it to go away. I just have it." The current state of known photogra-

phy can't produce what his equipment, his helicopter, and his gift of knowing what and when to photograph has produced, Fisher said.

"What I see is what I get. I actually know it before I see it when I see it. I can drive on the ground and know instinctively it is going to make a composition from the helicopter. When I am on the ground I think like I am in the helicopter."

Fisher's work ranges in price from \$44 for an 8 by 10 size to \$4,800 for a limited edition set of three images of ice, irrigation, and wheat.

His work is expensive to produce. The helicopter is an old one insured by Lloyd's of London. He has a full-time pilot.

His camera is of a secret design "that only two people in the world know about," he said. He uses an ex-

tremely high-speed shutter and a large negative format. He calls his optical system and lens "a phenomenal piece of equipment."

THE OPTICAL system allows "absolute depth of field," and the lens aperture is wide open, he said. But he didn't want to talk about the design of his camera.

He said he and a Navy friend made a \$2 experimental shutter "that beat itself to death — and it cost \$500 to replace it."

"My friend and I spent over \$70,000, and it took us several years to design the camera," he said. The difference in his commercial work and his artistic photographs is the subject matter, which is of his own choosing, Fisher said.

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Artists win awards

South Oakland Art Association recently presented their annual Artist of the Year awards. They went to Sharon Stewart, Southfield, first place; Glenn Miller, Troy, second place; and Robbie Carmichael, Bloomfield Hills and Carl Hilt, Troy, third place.

Officers for the coming year were installed at the awards banquet. They are: Jo Chiappelli, president; Ferno Milevovich, first vice president; Robbie Carmichael, second vice president;

Gladys Mulroy, recording secretary; Nancy Martelli, corresponding secretary; and Veronica Tobey, treasurer. Other committee members are: Kay Kann, Judy Pierce, Glenn Miller, Shirley Klucka, Mary Spindler, Phyllis Curran, Carl Hilt and Lillian Wolters.

Monthly meetings will resume in the fall beginning in September. Association members will be participating in two exhibits, May 14 at Winchester Mall, Rochester and July 25-31, Meadow Brook Mall, Rochester.

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