

Artist's early etching propelled her to new career

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

Jeanne Poulet is a woman who decided early that she wanted to experience everything that she could in the field of art, and she has just about done it.

She has had her successes in such forms as ceramics, painting and photoengraving but her favorite is

an etching process she developed herself.

"I consider myself self-trained, in that I've always learned new skills all my life," she said.

"I don't compete with God or the camera," Poulet said. "My work is innovative and out of my own head. It's an image that hasn't been conceived, but is both an emotional and intellectual response to what I see."

Now working from her Livonia studio/home, she said, "I like engraving and etching the best." Poulet said. "Sometimes I want to be chained to the bed and the desk, and have someone bring me my meals and let me do nothing but etching. Maybe once in a while, let me go out in the woods."

SHE DESCRIBES her etching process as a series of "dots and scratches," compared to other artists' etchings which are more linear.

"It's dots and scratches that then become a composite," Poulet said.

In this process, such tools as an engraver and stylus are used to imprint markings onto a metal etching plate that is treated with asphalt and resistant to acid.

After the marks are made, the plate is given a bath in nitric acid. The acid bites into the markings, and when the plate is inked, the ink stays in the grooves. A hand press is used to help pull the ink out of the grooves onto the paper.

Poulet said her method, using the hand press, is similar to a method used by Rembrandt centuries ago. She calls it "a la main," meaning "by hand." When color is added, using fingers or cotton swabs, she calls the technique "a la poupee."

WALKING through Poulet's home is like walking through an art gallery. In every room, her works line the shelves and fill the walls. A downstairs room is where sales are transacted. A room on another floor features a large desk, at which much of her artwork is done.

Poulet was born and reared in Montreal. Her background was filled with the arts, as her mother was a pianist and her father was an opera singer and a photographer.

"They were very much into literature and the arts as a lifestyle," Poulet recalled. "For example, we always had music. I remember my mother playing for me eight hours a day."

Poulet always enjoyed painting, but first worked as a secretary with



One of this Poulet work is entitled "Lost Souls." The artist said her method consists of "dots and scratches that then become a composite." She begins her work by using an engraver and stylus to imprint markings onto a

metal etching plate that is treated with asphalt and resistant to acid. The complete process, which uses a hand press, is similar to a method used by Rembrandt centuries ago, she said.

Air Canada. She left that job when she married, and began working at her art.

"I DID portraits, but they didn't give me enough," Poulet said.

Poulet started taking classes in ceramics, sculpture and welding at Schoolcraft College 12 years ago, and went on to study printmaking.

The curator at the Detroit Institute of Arts chose one of her early etchings — the fifth one she attempted — for a group showing of the Michigan Association of Printmakers. The work was later sold out of the London Arts Gallery in the Fisher Building.

"I had no idea I was ever going to make it," Poulet said. "That gave me the propulsion to keep working."

Poulet also studied at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montreal, the University of McGill and the University of

Gainesville. Her work has been shown at the 1982 Printmaking Exhibition at the Scarab Club and the Detroit Focus Gallery, both in Detroit, the Arts Association Annual '83 in Ann Arbor and the Paper Works Show at the Mill Gallery in Milford.

POULET decided to try to make a living at her art two years ago. Now she works with other engravers and artists, showing and selling their works as well as her own in her studio/home. A group of collectors has purchased her etchings.

"I have European tenacity, French savoir faire and American pizzazz," Poulet said with a smile.

Poulet credits others for being supportive of her, including her daughter and two sons. She is also grateful to Mary Ellen Croci, a fellow student at Schoolcraft who is an

area painter and colorist; Richard Saunders, formerly of the music department at the college; and Bob Dufort, who taught her printmaking there.

"BOB Dufort was my mentor," Poulet said. "He allowed me to run, he never inhibited me. He allowed me to grow in a unique way. He saw my individuality, and I will be eternally grateful to him."

Poulet says she will retire at the age of 96. Her future plans include developing a book on children's rights that would feature photographic and etching essays.

"I admire illustrators, but I don't want to be one," she said. "An illustrator copies nature and things for the commercial world. It's good, but it's not what I do. I'd rather make something with social content and comment."

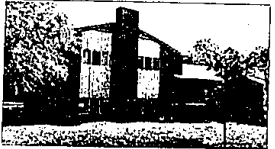


ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Artist Jeanne Poulet reflects on her works in front of one of her etchings. Her home abounds with examples of her work. The artist utilizes a process which she developed.



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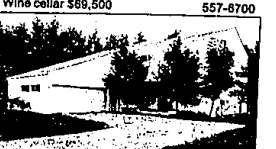
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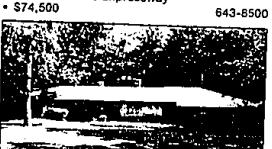
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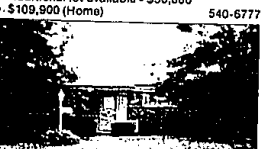
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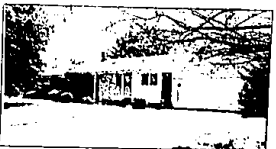
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