



American landscapes as fine art

By Carol Arizlen
staff writer

Mount Rainier looms majestically in violet, ultramarine blue and crimson splendor. Surf, sand and sky meet along the Oregon coastline in a swirling symphony of yellow, green and orange.

The cool winter colors and warm summer hues represent the two extremes in Johanna Haas' latest work — an oil and watercolor expression of "American Landscapes." She completed the 60-by-72-inch paintings with a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts.

Her show opens with a 6:30-9 p.m. reception for the artist on Friday at the Troy Art Gallery, 755 West Big Beaver.

"I was always fascinated by landscape and the beauty of the seasons," said the 59-year-old Detroit painter and longtime instructor at the Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association. "There is a unique variety in the American landscape that one is unable to find anywhere in the world. The powerful contrast of elements in vegetation, color and atmosphere is overwhelming."

A WORLD TRAVELER. Haas frequently crisscrosses the globe to capture vivid colors in her bold, expressionist-style landscapes.

Her fascination with all types of terrain began when she was a child growing up near Frankfurt (in East Germany).

"I grew up in the country and was attracted to nature and its aesthetic values," she said. "When I had to leave to attend school, I became a city girl. But my deep love for the earth and sky, especially for the mountains, remained."

She graduated from the German gymnasium (high school) when she was 19. During the next year, she was drafted to work in the German labor camps — digging potatoes, sewing and taking care of children.

Later enrolling in the drama pro-

gram at the University of Heidelberg, Haas studied to become an assistant producer for the theater or film industry. She graduated in 1950 with a bachelor of arts degree in drama.

In 1951, she married Lothar Haas and the couple moved to Montreal, Canada. She landed a bookkeeping job in a shoe factory and he went into hotel management. But Lothar Haas had difficulty finding steady work, so they decided to move to Detroit.

Here he launched his engineering career — working first as an apprentice for a tool company and later earning his degree at Lawrence Institute of Technology. He is now an engineer for Chrysler Corp. She did bookkeeping for a heating and plumbing wholesale office for 10 years.

IN THE MEANTIME, she studied painting. Her first teacher was an elderly Dutch artist who lived near their home on Grand River and West Chicago. In exchange for using one of her sketches to develop a painting, the artist gave Haas free lessons.

In 1958, she took night classes at the Center for Creative Studies, learning watercolor and oil painting from Nick Buchalski.

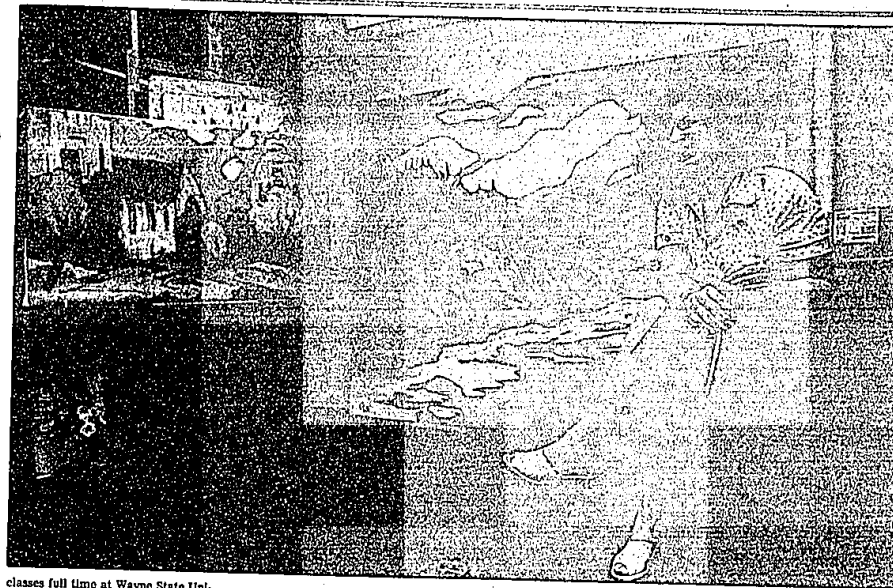
Four years later, Haas returned to Europe to enroll in an art school in Munich and spend six weeks at the Oskar Kokoschka School of Vision in Salzburg, Austria.

"At Kokoschka, we had to paint models in 15 minute poses for eight hours a day," she recalled. "It was very nerve-racking and strenuous."

When she came back to Detroit, Haas faced a crucial decision. "I told my husband that I wanted to do what I enjoyed — either music (she studied piano and violin when she was young) or painting. He said, 'paint, it's quieter.'"

While working days as an artist for Simons-Michaelson Advertising and Cunningham Drug Stores, Haas continued her art education at night at the Center for Creative Studies.

In 1970, she quit her job to attend



classes full time at Wayne State University. Completing her bachelor's degree in two semesters (with accumulated credit from other schools) in 1970, she went on to earn a master's in 1972.

Establishing a studio in the basement of the former Book family home in Indian Village, Haas plunged into her painting career. She began teaching at the Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association in 1972 and has remained there ever since.

"I take a SEATT & Laps to Cranbrook and Maple and walk a mile (to the BBAA). My husband and I also walk around Belle Isle every Sunday. It keeps us fit for Europe."

During their frequent jaunts overseas, the couple walk extensively and even enjoy mountain climbing.

Haas earned a second master's — in fine arts — from Wayne State in 1974. She was represented by the former Little Gallery in Birmingham until a few years ago, when the Troy Art Gallery began carrying her work. The Baukunst Architecture Gallery in Cologne and Gadsby Gallery in Toronto also show Haas' paintings.

Her other accomplishments include an outdoor mural next to the Coach



House Gallery in Detroit. She has entered her work in numerous shows around the country and in Europe. Her paintings are included in several

corporate collections. And, her list of awards includes recent prizes from the Michigan Fine Arts Exhibition at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art As-

Johanna Haas has a studio near the Detroit riverfront and travels by bus to teach at Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association. Behind her is a 60-by-72-inch painting of the Oregon coastline. On the easel is a painting of the Pennsylvania in winter.

Staff photos by Mindy Saunders

sociation, Michigan Watercolor Society, Detroit Society of Women Painters and Sculptors, Wayne State University and Detroit Artist Market.

Where's the art?



A show of paintings by Allen Burke at Xochipilli Gallery of Birmingham will be on the gallery tour. Burke's powerful oils are filled with tension and violence. The show opens Saturday and continues through Oct. 20. In 1982 he was the only Michigan artist to receive a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Painting.

Gallery gala tour offered by BBAA

The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, with the cooperation of 28 participating art galleries, will sponsor its second annual Gallery Gala tour 1-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 30. The afternoon of gallery hopping ends with a buffet supper at 6:30 p.m. at the BBAA, 1516 South Cranbrook, Birmingham.

Highlights of the tour include a preview of the exhibition of William House, a well-known Michigan artist, at the Rubiner Gallery; Max Beckmann's etchings, lithographs and woodcuts at Sheldon Ross Gallery and the Han Dynasty exhibit at Dolansky. The Robert L. Kidd Associates/

Galleries will present an exhibition of new paintings by Moe Brooker and recent sculptures in stone and wood by Christopher Bertl and a one-artist exhibit of large paintings by Johanna Haas on display at Troy Art Gallery.

There will be a mystery art game and other prizes, plus entertainment by guitarist Rick Flores. As an added attraction, Doug Grech will judge the table settings for originality and prizes will be awarded.

Tickets are \$20 per person and are available at the BBAA, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday. For more information call 644-0884.

Riding hall due for major change

The riding hall and adjoining stables where Matilda Dodge Wilson and her daughter, Frances Dodge VanLanzen, once rode and kept their horses will be transformed into a health/exhibition center for Oakland University.

Constructed in 1929 for Alfred and Matilda Wilson as a major part of the Meadow Brook Estate, the 40,000-square-foot riding hall was considered "the Cadillac of indoor rings." It will be restored to keep its historic character and architectural design.

"They (hall and stables) were built for their saddle horses and Hackney ponies," recalled Vera Donlin McIntyre, longtime secretary for Wilson.

"Frances moved the saddle horses to a farm in Lexington, Ky., and took the Hackney ponies to (other) stables in Rochester (in the 1940s). Sometimes, she invited her friends for parties in the riding hall."

Mrs. Wilson kept some of her Hackney ponies (at the Oakland University) stable and sold them just before Wilson died in 1943, McIntyre said.

Since then, the university has used the facilities as a storage area.

THE \$1.7 MILLION renovation for both riding hall and stable began in November. Once restoration work is completed, the riding hall will be the second historic campus structure eligible for recognition by state and national registries. Meadow Brook Hall is the first.

According to Robert McGarry, OU's vice-president for finance and administration, converting the riding hall into a conference/exhibition facility is pegged at \$700,000.

The first phase of renovations for the riding hall consists of covering the dirt floor with asphalt or concrete. A donor is paying the nearly \$70,000 required for that job. University officials hope to raise the rest of the money — about \$630,000 — from private donations.

The hall will accommodate up to 1,000 people, making it suitable for the following:

- conference groups too large for Meadow Brook Hall;
- social and theatre hospitality programs involving groups larger than the hall's capacity;
- art fairs, craft fairs, antique and other cultural exhibits;

- Glyndebourne picnic-type fund-raising events;
- commercial exhibits and other community, business and government exhibition activities;
- large university group events, such as those related to the annual Gehring-Kaline golf outing and the Concours D'Elegance;
- food service area for large groups such as Christmas Walk tourists;
- student activities; student theatre; athletic programs; auctions; dance programs; and community shows.

Revamping the north stable for use as a health center will cost approximately \$1 million, according to McGarry. Most of the money — \$650,000 — is coming from an insurance settlement (as a result of a June 1983 fire). The remainder will come from private donations.

THE NEW Meadow Brook Health Enhancement Center will be housed both in the riding hall and stables and headed by Dr. Fred W. Stransky, director of OU's exercise science program. He has offered health services in the university's Lepley

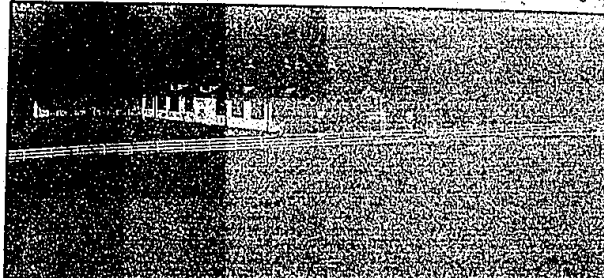
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Sports Center for the past several years, but needs larger facilities to accommodate his growing program.

"We're no longer able to meet the demand of the community," Stransky said.

Stressing health promotion and disease prevention, Stransky helps community members identify lifestyle factors which contribute to chronic degenerative illnesses (including cancer, diabetes, stroke and coronary artery disease).

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This tranquil scene of the Meadow Brook Hall riding hall and stables will probably remain about the same while the interior

becomes a health/exhibition center. The plan is to maintain the historic integrity of the buildings.