

Changing attitudes easing artistic struggle

By Faye Kuzma
special writer

WOMEN ARE changing their attitudes toward themselves," observed artist Electra Stamelos during her recent slide presentation chronicling the accomplishments of Michigan women artists for "Women: Focus '86."

The conference, held on the University of Michigan's Dearborn campus, reflected that changing attitude. Stamelos' story mirrors that of many women-artists in traditionally male fields. Persistence in the face of mixed messages from male tutors and colleagues and determination in spite of family responsibilities and illness characterize the attitude of the successful woman artist. Such an attitude often leads a woman to take ground-breaking steps.

Stamelos, for instance, was only the second woman to graduate with a master of fine arts in water color from Eastern Michigan in 1976. She was about 49 years old.

Stamelos recalls her father's well-meaning advice: "It's OK to be an artist, but learn typing." Such comments were typical from her parent's generation; yet, even after returning to school — having put in 15 years as a typist — Stamelos still heard non-supportive remarks such as: "How can you be an artist and be married?" This time, it came from the Pepsi generation.

TODAY, STAMELOS is a successful water color painter whose vision incites figurative abstractions. Her works are exhibited in such galleries as SoHo's Artrage and the Michigan Gallery in Washington, D.C. In the metro-area, she is perhaps best known for her efforts in saving the Wilson Dairy Barn in Livonia; her encouraging style of teaching water color for the Birmingham Bloom-

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— Electra Stamelos
artist-instructor

field Art Association, BBAA; and her rapid-fire insights in commenting on art as an adjunct lecturer at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. She also serves the university as director of art acquisitions and exhibitions.

Stamelos paints organic shapes with technical veracity, as in "Blue Cabbage" on exhibit at the Cantor Lemberg Gallery on N. Woodward. Inspired by the farm life near her home in Hartland, the study of cabbage is also based on her love of geometric forms. For hidden beneath the leaves and layers of glazes, Stamelos designed a pattern of triangles arranged according to the ancient method for creating dynamic symmetry, the golden mean.

While teaching beginning and advanced water color at the BBAA, Stamelos has tutored several well-known Michigan women artists, including Laura Whiteside Host, Lillian Moran and Mary Lou Westmas. Reflecting the struggles and achievements of Michigan's women artists, their stories were echoed throughout the slide presentation covering the lives and work-styles of some two dozen women artists.

HOST, WHO EARNED a bachelor of fine arts degree and teaching certificate from the University of Michigan in 1971, has two children, ages 4

and 6. Still, she has managed to teach art in elementary and secondary schools while also working as a free-lance artist. When her daughter was five years old, she determined to take water color classes at the BBAA. Since that time, she has started to produce more finished work. In fact, she has begun to show her work and pick up prizes. Contact with other artists, Host comments "keeps the juices flowing."

The vital interaction possible in the art class is also valued by Lillian Moran, who received her bachelor of fine arts degree from Wayne State University. Moran asserts: "Art classes create the proper environment for total artistic freedom." Such an approach is reflected in Moran's entirely original vision of a still life.

Stamelos explains that she sets up a still life "merely as a reminder of shape and form." Moran takes it from there. "If all the student's work looks like the teacher's," Stamelos advises, "Run." An art class should inspire interaction, not imitation.

APPLYING HER UNIQUE style, Moran designs the Michigan Water Color Society's catalogues and invitations. Added to this full schedule are responsibilities as wife and mother. Yet, Moran maintains her



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

To make as an artist today, a woman must view herself first as a professional, Electra Stamelos told a Women: Focus '86 audience recently at the University of Michigan-Dear-

born. She is shown here with her watercolor, "Blue Cabbage," on exhibit at the Cantor Lemberg gallery in Birmingham.

commitment through her art classes. Stamelos commented that Moran frequently completes two paintings during one class period.

Sometimes, however, keeping an artistic appointment becomes a trial. A refrain among stories of women artists is the struggle to find time for their art amid the demands of family and illness. Westmas, the oldest artist Stamelos profiled, is fighting illness. Michigan winters are

particularly troublesome to her. Nevertheless, she continues to paint and vivify the woman artist's requisite determination despite adversity.

Often women can offer each other the support lacking elsewhere. "I advocate support groups," Stamelos affirms. Like the artists who met in Paris Salons, Stamelos recommends compatible artists from small critique groups. Including spouses can also enlighten attitudes about women artists. Stamelos suggests artists

keep groups small and practice honesty, acceptance and love.

To make it as an artist today, a woman must view herself first as a professional. According to Stamelos, "Her 8 to 10 hours a day at work should not be interfered with." However, Stamelos acknowledges "At the same time, marriage takes work and support." Therefore, for women, the effort remains, as Stamelos puts it, "a juggling act."

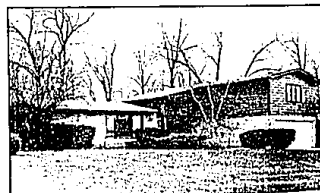
exhibitions

- CADE GALLERY**
Saturday, June 26 — Mixed-media paintings by James Poole, color woodcuts by Carolyn Swift Armitage and furniture by Don Eifert will be on exhibit through July 23. Reception for the artists 3-7 p.m. Saturday. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 214 W. Sixth, Royal Oak.
- TOWN CENTER GALLERY**
Tuesday, June 24 — Paintings with non-traditional materials by Luz Ines Mercier, Southwestern Images by Jean Richardson and silkscreen metal cats by D. Gerstein along with gallery selections are on exhibit during the month. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, 3000 Town Center, Southfield.
- TROY ART GALLERY**
Tuesday, July 1 — Landscapes, cityscapes and flowers by local, national and international artists continues through August. Summer hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, until 3 p.m. Saturday. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 755 W. Big Beaver, Troy.
- D & J BITTKER GALLERY, LTD.**
Wednesday, July 2 — Contemporary and Antique Japanese Textiles plus regular gallery collection of 18th- and 19th-century Chinese furniture continues through Aug. 3. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 536 N. Woodward, Birmingham.
- COUNTY GALLERIA**
Wednesday, July 2 — "Mostra D'Arte," an exhibit of Italian-American artists, continues through Aug. 14. Reception to meet the artists 6:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 9. Exhibit sponsored by Oakland County Cultural Council and the Italian Study Group of Troy. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, Oakland County Executive Building, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.
- PEWABIC POTTERY**
Student show will continue through July 20. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 10125 E. Jefferson, Detroit.



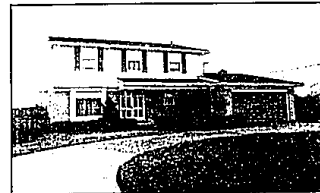
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