

Rolling Mennonite interest gathers Moss fans

By Arlene Funke
special writer

THE PAINTINGS of P. Buckley Moss draw the viewer into a peaceful world filled with gentle people and tame animals.

Moss, a Virginia artist who has won international acclaim for her paintings of Mennonite people, recently visited the Frame Works Gallery in Plymouth to publicize her work and meet with fans.

"I don't do anything to order," explained the 53-year-old artist. "I have to be inspired. If I'm inspired, I will do it."

Moss, who likes to be called Pat, grew up on Staten Island, N.Y. For the past 20 years, she has lived in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where she became acquainted with the simple, deeply religious Amish and Mennonite people who live a bygone lifestyle.

"I WAS ATTRACTED to the Mennonites," said Moss, who expresses her own spiritual beliefs through her art. "I admire their wholesomeness and goodness."

The Moss paintings of Mennonite themes, often in pale green and purple hues, evoke peace and tranquility, a haven from the often-frantic modern pace. Moss allows the viewer insight into a private, little-known people.

Mennonite men are depicted with beards, their heads covered by large black hats. Women and girls wear

demure caps, long dresses and aprons. Typically, they are shown in a rural setting, riding in horse-drawn buggies, standing in front of church, clad in wedding garb or making quilts.

Often the backdrop is stark, wind-swept or snow-covered.

"She has a strong following here," said Alvin Larson of the Frame Works. "We've drawn people (customers) from the western suburbs, Rochester and Elmira."

MOSS ASKS EACH person buying a print of painting: "Where did you first see my work?" She seems genuinely interested in their answers, and they discuss titled paintings as if they were old friends. A relaxed and unpretentious Moss makes suggestions on how the paintings should be displayed.

Her works are available as watercolors, original prints (lithographs, silk screens and etchings) and offset lithographs. Only selected galleries carry her pieces. Prices range from around \$20 for a small print, to several thousand dollars for an original watercolor.

Moss also has created collections of porcelain collector plates and figurines. One example of her Mennonite theme is "Country Road," which depicts a Mennonite couple riding in a horse and buggy. It costs \$375 framed. Another piece shows a Mennonite mother with baby standing in front of a plain, white church. A large original watercolor, entitled "Unity of Joy," carries a \$15,000 price tag.

"This was a Mennonite boy dying of leukemia," she explains while signing her name to a print showing a youth in a rural, Mennonite setting.

MOSS ALSO IS fond of painting stately geese and horses, because they are "symbols of stability. Canada geese stay together for life."

In her porcelain plates, Moss is challenged by the necessity of developing harmony and perspective within a small, rounded space. For Buckley, the round plate duplicates an endless circle, symbolizing family and love.

Moss attended Cooper Union, a prestigious art school in New York. During this time, she transcribed and illustrated Thomas Aquinas' "Book on Man."

"I was a very idealistic person," she said.

She married and had six children. Although busy, she always squeezed in time for her art.

"I got started the very hard way," Moss said. "I had my family and painted. You like doing your work and enjoying your family. And as your family grows, you can move about."

AFTER MOVING TO Virginia, Moss began showing her work sidewalk art shows and mall exhibits. At that time, her watercolors sold for around \$10 each. After meeting some Mennonite people while attending country auctions, Buckley found a tranquil world to reproduce on canvas.

The Coca-Cola Co., headquartered in Atlanta, boosted her career by buying several of her paintings. Today, the highly successful Moss travels extensively, both in the United States and abroad, promoting awareness and culture. She works in a converted barn studio in Virginia and another studio in Florida. As has



Fans of artist Pat Buckley Moss lined up in front of the Frameworks in Plymouth to meet her and have her sign their artwork.

been her lifelong habit, she often naps in the early evening, then paints through the night and early morning.

Moss also has participated in charitable work, notably to fight hunger in Africa. Her print, "Family Love," she donated to the Mennonite Central Committee Africa Fund. According to a Moss newsletter, sales from the print have raised more than \$44,000 so far for the fund.

"WE'VE BEEN ASKED by our government to be on the cultural exchange with Russia," Moss added.

"We feel all people are brothers." Success has given Moss the freedom to do the kind of work she most enjoys, but it has placed heavy demands on her privacy and her high work standards.

"It's a very exciting thing to do the things you like best," she said. "Maintaining high standards — that's the pressure you put on yourself. You have all the artistic freedom in the world."

Moss enjoys touring, because it gives her cherished, private moments with her second husband

British-born Malcolm Henderson, whom she met when he carried her artwork in his Washington, D.C., gallery. Now Henderson is her business manager.

The three-week tour, which brought Moss to Plymouth, also included a stop in Saginaw, as well as points in Illinois, Indiana and Missouri.

Moss has advice for students and young people: "I always tell them to do the thing you like best," she said. "Go with what you like to do. The other part will work itself out."

Moss also is fond of painting stately geese and horses because they are 'symbols of stability. Canada geese stay together for life.'

— Pat Buckley Moss

At her appearance in Plymouth, Pat Buckley Moss introduced her new Christmas paintings, one of which is shown here.



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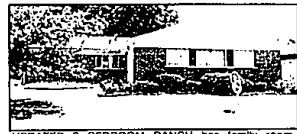
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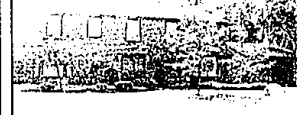
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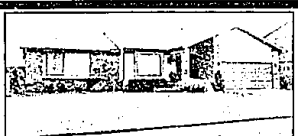
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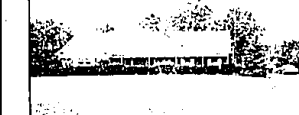
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