

Creative Living

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'Our Town,' Oct. 23-26

Businessman enjoys sharing his good fortune...

By Corinne Aball
staff writer

Among the key ingredients necessary to put on a major art event such as "Our Town," taking place at Birmingham's Community House, Oct. 23-26, are energy, enthusiasm, a dedicated core of volunteers and money.

This latter was graciously supplied by C. Robert Carson of Carson Business Interiors Inc. of Southfield. Not only did Carson provide the initial \$25,000 to underwrite this statewide competition and related activities, he has supplied more since along with ideas, expertise and enthusiasm.

"We started the business in 1962. Our employees are from the community, our clients are from the community and we wanted to return the things the community does for us."

As he spoke about his admiration for Julie Dawson and Pat Mayhew, volunteer chairmen of "Our Town," exhibition judge, Mary Dennis and The Community House staff, he said, "It is getting more exciting all the time," he said. "It has turned out to be a real fitting thing for us to do."

THE FACT that it has had such good response from artists throughout the state with more than 200 pieces juried into the final exhibit doesn't hurt either.

An art exhibit also is an appropriate project for Carson Business Interiors Inc. to sponsor. Carson and his wife, Frances, West Bloomfield residents, started their careers as school teachers. She taught at Adams school in Birmingham and he started the instrumental music program in the Southfield school district.

After he got out of the service after the Korean War, he decided to try something else — selling. He started his own firm, Computer Products Inc. in 1962.

"When Steele asked us to take over their whole line in 1964, we gradually converted from selling data processing to office furniture. The design department was added in 1976 and we started with one designer and now we have 15."

The firm is presently located on Northwestern, two blocks north of 12 Mile. By June of next year, a new building on that site will be completed and that will anchor what is to become Carson Center. Carson Business Interiors will occupy about 20,000 square feet of the building which will also be leased to other tenants.

Carson, who has profited from the boom in office and space planning, likes sharing his success with the community at large. He attends the "Our Town" planning sessions, meets with Dawson and Mayhew on a regu-

lar basis and noted early on in the planning that a lot more than the walls of The Community House would be needed for proper display of the art.

As a result, The Community House space will be converted to gallery space with temporary room dividers and some 70 kiosks serving as display areas.

CARSON IS the complete opposite of the absentee donor, he is looking forward to the \$100 per person opening benefit, the two seminars on original art in the office and original art in the home on Friday, Oct. 24, the Friday evening party hosted by the Birmingham Newcomers and the Saturday artists reception and awards ceremony.

Most of all C. Robert Carson is having fun. There's a pleasant camaraderie among him and his business associates. Just last week the U-M and MSU alumni had their offices decorated accordingly (Carson's was ablaze in maize and blue). He enjoys working, being a part of the community and sharing his success.

And this year, a lot of Michigan artists and art buffs are benefiting from that success. And when the three day event is over, the capital building fund of The Community House will be the big winner.

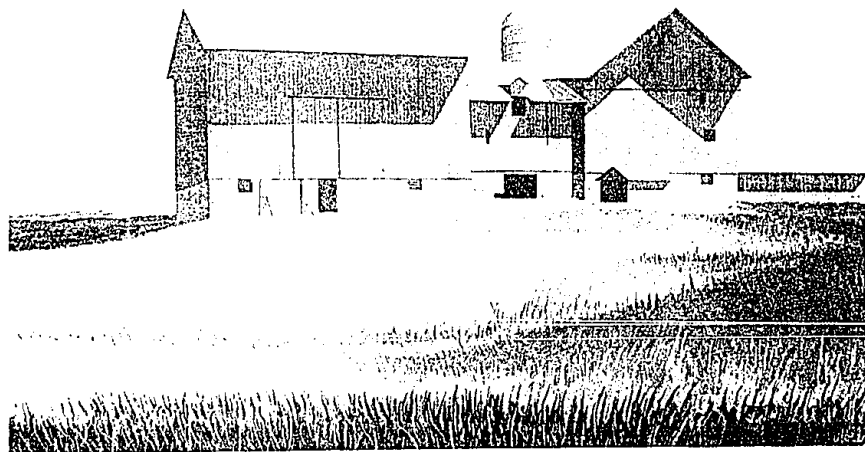


C. Robert Carson said underwriting a statewide art exhibit as a benefit for Birmingham's Community House turned out to be an excel-

lent way for him to return the support that the community has given him and his business over the years.

LAURA CASTLE/staff photographer

...and state's artists respond to the challenge



Painter/designer Paul Wolber of Parma calls this acrylic, which was accepted for the "Our Town" exhibition, "Michigan Morn-

ing." The artist is professor of painting and design at Spring Arbor College.



Charles S. Gillis of Berkley is an illustrator for Skidmore-Sahrn of Troy. This acrylic, one of four of his in the show, is titled, "New American Gothic."

Exhibition events planned

"Our Town," will open with a \$100 per person benefit at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23. For reservations for that event which includes cocktails, dinner and preview, call 644-5832.

Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 26.

Two seminars are scheduled for Friday. Sheila Morgan will be the speaker at a business lunch at The Community House at noon with the topic, "Original Art in the Office." Morgan is project manager for a firm of architects and interior designers in Richmond, Va. Tickets are \$12 and advance registration is required. Call 644-5832 for information.

"Original Art in the Home" is the subject for the 2:30-4 p.m. seminar on Friday, Oct. 24. The four-person panel includes Florence Morris, gallery owner, Robin Goldman, interior designer, Lucy Van Dusen, collector and Nancy Ryan, gallery staff member and DIA docent. Tickets are \$5.

Birmingham Newcomers will host a wine and cheese party at the exhibit 6:30-10 p.m. Friday.

The artists reception and awards ceremony is 2 p.m. Saturday and the Oakland County Dental Society will hold a dinner party Saturday evening.

Exhibition admission is \$2. Sunday is family day and children will be admitted free on that day.

The Community House is at 380 S. Bates, Birmingham.



Carol Hanson of Farmington used prismacolor for her drawing of the cemetery on Memorial Day. At right, Fran Nicholson's watercolor is "Birmingham Renewed."



Birmingham photographer Roger Bickel chose this photo for his entry in the "Our

Town" competition. It is called "Lake-side."