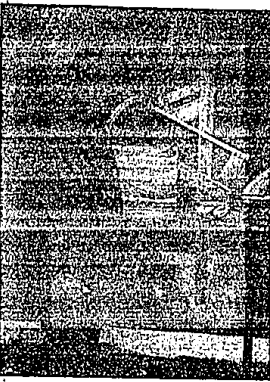


His long climb pays off



Continued from Page 1

arts degree from Yale University, lived in New York for a year prior to teaching at Wayne. "I feel that's long enough to make anyone feel like a New Yorker," he quipped.

His fifth floor studio (no elevator) on the fringes of Soho in a venerable old New York building, is reached by a flight of almost perpendicular stairs. (But this rugged feat of near mountain climbing is as nothing compared to the plunging descent, which is as vertiginous as a camera shot from a Hitchcock movie.)

Egner's eyrie, heated by a woodstove, is a dazzling vista of monumental, abstract oil paintings which look like murals, and are surely meant to hang on the walls of a museum or a corporate foyer.

FOR THIS fairly recent flat-surface painting, Egner employs two-dimensional geometric shapes and sharp angles. He does not make preliminary sketches, and by purposely omitting the perspective ellipse (a three-dimensional illusion in painting), he nevertheless produces a great depth of field. The paintings have a sculptural effect, made radiant by the application of opaque and translucent color.

Egner's articulateness is spiced with wit. He said the large canvases can take anywhere from a year to eighteen months to complete. "I worry over them," he said, "keep

changing them, and all the time think, oh no, this is not preposterous enough for me. But it takes a lot of nerve."

Another, slightly smaller canvas on the wall has a somewhat Japanese character — with mountains in the background and Egner's characteristic "grid" taking on the aspect of a tatami mat. "Well yes," he said imperturbably, without blinking an eyelid, "it can be seen that way."

It took Egner 20 years to find a gallery in New York, but perhaps the wait was worth it. He is now affiliated with the highly respected Richard Greene Gallery in Soho and with the Susanne Hillberry Gallery in Birmingham. Because of his many years of teaching and widespread connections, he probably has more contact with Detroit artists living in New York than anyone else interviewed.

"There must be about 100 alumni from Detroit in New York," he said, "and I see at least some of them from time to time. We threw a party not long ago, and around 40 Detroit artists turned up. But when I'm working, I tend to hermitic and hide myself away in the studio."

"One thing that really impresses me," he continued, "about the Cass Corridor artists, whether they be in New York or Detroit, is that they are still making good art. They were good then, and they are good now."

The same must be said for John Egner himself.

John Egner, pictured in his New York City studio in an old building on the fringes of Soho, has been working there for eight years and living there as a permanent resident for the past three.

Combining beauty, function

Continued from Page 1

their lives for the people to survive, a special relationship had to be established with them. If a hunter did not follow this prescription, the animals would disappear and the people would starve.

These beliefs are behind the powerful effect these objects have on the modern viewer as we face a part of our ancient selves living in a precarious but vital harmony with the world.

The artifacts vary in size, contour and decoration and are classified Okvik, Old Bering Sea, Punuk and Ipiutuk according to age and style. Over time, flat textures and geometric patterns become rounded, fleshy figures clothed with inventive curvilinear designs and raised surfaces.

ORNAMENTS AND harpoon socket pieces depicting animals devour-

ing other animals serve as spiritual helpers in the hunt. Some images have magical connotations used by shamans to explore other worlds in search of cures for the sick.

Along with the exhibit, the DIA staff is offering free public lectures and workshops for children about Eskimo art.

On Jan. 25, Allen Wardwell gave a slide lecture emphasizing that the decorations on Bering Strait Ivories were unique among all northern Eskimo groups.

At the first children's workshop, Mariann Smith led the kids through the exhibit where they revealed how much they already knew about Eskimos. Then they moved down to the basement workshop, where they met Abraham T. Poole, an Inuit sculptor from Labrador who now lives in Windsor.

Abraham showed the children articles made or owned by his family

and friends including three types of snowshoes, leg warmers, peace pipes, moccasins, animals skins, soapstone carvings and the flag of the Inuit people. The flag had two sets of caribou antlers and a pair of snowshoes on a green, white and blue ground.

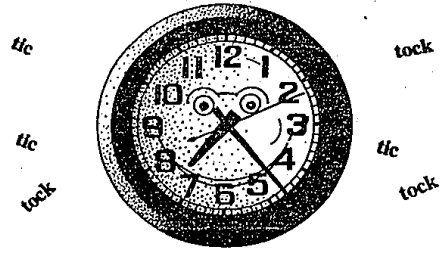
Then he showed them how to carve a beaver from a bar of soap. For an hour and a half, Abraham helped each child with few deft and not-so-deft twists of the carving knife, magically bringing his own "ivory" to life.

The exhibit and accompanying activities run through March 22.

For the children's workshops on Feb. 28 and March 14, call 833-9804. For lectures on Feb. 25 and March 14, call 833-7900.

Abraham Poole will host a radio show called "Red Horizon" every Wednesday 7-7:30 p.m. on 91.5 FM.

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