

# Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300

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JERRY ZOLYNSKY/Staff photographer

Bertha Cohen's painting of the woman at the table has a landscape within the painting, something she frequently includes to heighten the mystery of place.

## Impact fills Cohen's work

By Corinne Abbott  
staff writer

Bertha Cohen's paintings are a complex mixture of emotional responses to what she calls "the human condition."

Her one-artist exhibition, which opens Friday at Troy Art Gallery, is largely figurative works. There are a few bold, strong, flower paintings, but even these vibrate with emotion.

Cohen, born in Brazil, has been steadily achieving recognition since she began showing her work in the mid-'70s. She dealt with the celebrations and feast day scenes that were a part of her life there for several years.

Then her introspection deepened as she looked at family, friends and, ultimately, herself. The strokes became larger, often rougher, the lines stronger and the colors bolder. The bright, fragile, decorative elements all but disappeared so basic human emotions — fear, anger, devotion, depression — could be more clearly portrayed.

"I know this is risk-taking," she said, "but this is the exciting part. This is what I am at this stage now. Not to intellectualize liberates me from the formal confines of art."

So often uses herself as the model, she said, because it is not only convenient but it gives her more freedom of expression. These paintings come from within, they are an emotional response to the environment, rather than a visual one.

"There is always something left out for you to complete this merger of intellect and emotion has to be an exact level."

This is the challenge she gives herself, to maintain the balance between the two, to maintain her inner credibility and her sense of truth.

"This is a society afraid of ex-



Bertha Cohen has several paintings of brides in her current show because the weddings of her three daughters were a part of her life for several years.

pressing itself, of acknowledging what is going on around them . . . One should be attuned to what's happening. I am just responding to environment."

The point, however, is that Cohen's environment goes beyond the tangible borders of her life. Her vision is broad and her background contributes substantially to that breadth of scope.

She is an intense person who isn't afraid to share her vision. She has won several national and regional awards in the past two years.

The show continues through June 6. Reception for the artist 6:30-9 p.m. Friday, Troy Art Gallery, 755 W. Big Beaver, Suite 131, Troy, is open 11 a.m. to 5:50 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and until 4 p.m. Saturday.



The lady in the hat is a strong work done in black and gray.

## Morris Brose

### The man, his life, his sculpture

By Manon Mollgaard  
special writer

Since 1984, director Gere Baskin and members of the Detroit Focus Gallery have been honoring a Michigan artist with a solo retrospective exhibition, recognizing the philosophies and creative working processes in his medium.

Artists so honored were G. Alden Smith and Ellen Will. This year the artist is Detroit sculptor and teacher Morris Brose — an admirable choice. The exhibition, covering a 35-year span, gives an outstanding viewpoint of this artist's many facets.

Brose, who has a slight and charming Central European accent, vivid blue eyes and the energy of someone half his age, was born in the village of Wyszynow, Poland, in 1914. There he attended a mixed Polish-Jewish grammar school and the Wyszynow Gymnasium.

In 1932, he left for the United States to join his mother, brothers and sister who had already relocated in Detroit. And none too soon. Brose recalls with pain that some nine or 10 years later, a horrifying number of Polish Jews were victims of the death camps, including members of his own family.

**DURING HIS FIRST** years in Detroit he found work as a watchmaker and eventually started his own furniture business. "But," he said, "I didn't want to be a merchant or a peddler forever. I was always thinking about art and creating things with my own hands."

In 1947, he began studies at the Society of Arts and Crafts (now the Center for Creative Studies) and later attended Cranbrook Academy of Art. He became an instructor at both schools, set up the sculpture department at Oakland University and was responsible for the planning and organization of CCS's foundry. He also initiated the more private artists' studios at CCS, still known as "Brose's cubicles."

In 1960 Brose moved to Italy for a two-year stay, where he learned to appreciate the skills of Italian foundry workers and where he created such bronzes as "Roman Landscape," "Abraham," "Father of Abraham" and "Fantasia." All are included in the present exhibition.

"The best bronze casting in the world is in Rome," he said, "although the foundry at the Center comes close."

Part of Brose's longing to create art goes back to early memories of

Poland and his fascination with watching how the village carpenter and village blacksmith made magical things with pieces of wood and iron. To this day, Brose has a penchant for black patinas — reminiscent of the blacksmith's work.

Another early source of inspiration was the River Bug, which flows beneath Wyszynow and which formed the basis of river imagery prevalent in many of his sculptures; for example, "Jordan IV" and "River Tango" in the Focus exhibition and in many outdoor sculptures.

**ANOTHER IMPORTANT RHYTHM** is the grace of dance movements. "The contained moment, charged with energy just before the dancer leaps into movement."

In fact, all Brose's sculptures, large and small, in bronze, steel and wood, might be translated into three categories: the solid form, the gestural (rhythm of movement — river, trees and dance) and the religious. His four plaster heads, dating from 1952 to 1983, seem to literally spring from the pages of Greek drama.

Fine examples of wood sculpture are "Rhodes I," 1969, lamenting the elms of Michigan felled by the dreaded Dutch elm disease (symbolically linked with human sacrifice in Rhodes and Vietnam) and the delightful "Dream" sculpted in pear wood, 1958.

In his steel model of the doors for the Holocaust Memorial Center 1985, one is poignantly reminded of the barred doors of the gas chamber — from which there is no escape.

His bronze "Aron Ha-Kodesh" 1985-86, which he designed for the Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills, is a testimony to endurance and faith. For this, he made a symbolic sculpture which encases a Torah badly damaged during the Holocaust — damaged, but miraculously rescued.

The artist's ready wit is deliciously pertinent in many works, for example, his steel "Don Quixote" 1969, put together with a motley collection of found objects and his small bronze sculpture, "Portrait of My Dog" 1973.

**BROSE DOESN'T MAKE** preparatory drawings. He makes small bronze models or wood built together for his large pieces and often creates delicate molds in wax.

Of his latest, large sculpture in



BILL SANDERS

Morris Brose works on a wood sculpture in his studio, above. Below is "Dream Pear," 25 by 11 by 8 inches, done in 1958, part of the artist's retrospective at Detroit Focus Gallery.

the series, "Passages" 1987, he says of its simple, flowing, but scaled down lines, "I am trying to achieve the most with the least, to strip away the mundane and the pedestrian, to free the mind of too many embellishments and to diminish rather than enhance."

Morris Brose is married to Detroit sculptor and teacher, Sue Linburg. His work is included in numerous public collections such as the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.; the Renaissance Center, Detroit; the Chase Manhattan Bank, New York; Yale University, Cranbrook Academy of Art; and the Cultural Center, Kiryat Gat in Israel. His outdoor and indoor commissions are found throughout the Metro Detroit area.

A sensitive and comprehensive essay on Brose's life and work by Diane Kirkpatrick, professor of art history, University of Michigan with a foreword by Gere Baskin, accompanies the exhibition. The catalogue was designed by Edward Fella, photographs by Bill Sanders. The artist will give a gallery talk dealing with the process and evolution of his work at 2 p.m. Saturday,



May 16 with a reception afterward. Detroit Focus Gallery is at 743 Beaubien, Detroit. Continues through May 23. Gallery hours are 12-6 p.m. Wednesday - Saturday.



## Furniture, past and present

Among the products Michigan is and was famous for — sugar beets, cherries, football teams and cars — furniture stands tall and solid. And of that latter group, not well known but much loved, there's woven wicker by Lloyd/Flanders in Menominee.

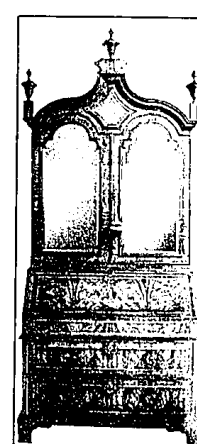
In the early part of the century, many proud parents took their first baby for its first trip outdoors in a wicker baby buggy made in Menominee on what was then considered a remarkable piece of machinery, the Lloyd Loom.

Since 1983, Lloyd/Flanders has been marketing outdoor furniture using the patented machine-made wicker from the Lloyd looms. There's a display of it in the window of the Jacobson's Store for the Home of Birmingham.

Baker Furniture Co. of Grand Rapids, long a household name and product, aims for the high



end of the market with its sumptuous collection, Baker Slaty Home, reproductions of the superb antiques, which graced the great castles of England and Scotland. The Early Queen Anne walnut bureau-cabinet is on display at Jacobson's Store for the Home of Birmingham along with other Slaty Home pieces.



Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky