

Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



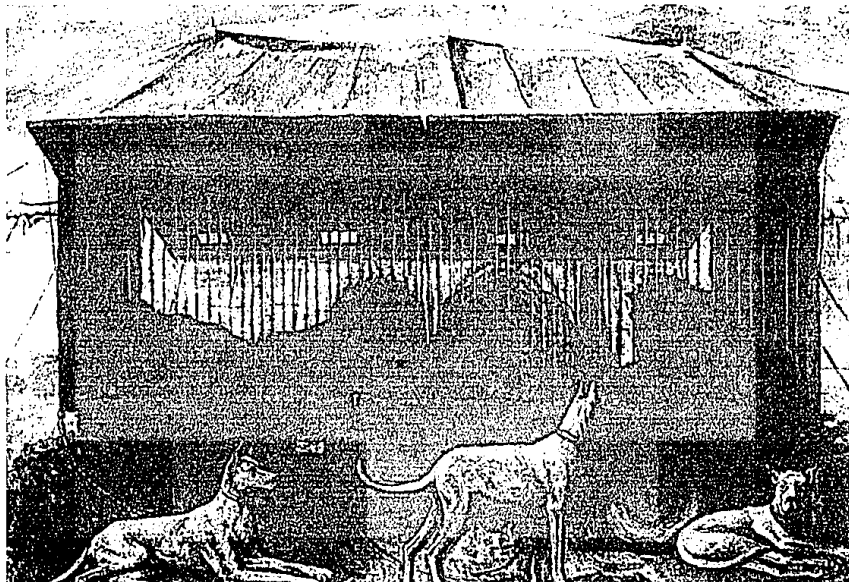
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(F1E)



Jo-Anne Westerby, daughter of the artist Robert A. Herzberg, and her niece, Tina Herzberg, have done all of the matting, framing and preparation of the drawings, paintings and photographs for three shows of his work, two in the metropolitan area and one (group exhibition) in East Lansing. At right is one of Herzberg's many paintings of the circus.

Staff photos by Stephen Cantrell



Rediscovering a Michigan artist

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

A new generation of Michiganders is about to discover the art of Robert A. Herzberg. Certainly there are people around who recall seeing his drawings and sketches in the metropolitan area daily papers in the 30s and 40s. Others may have bought paintings, sketches and portraits from him and a few may have even seen his work in exhibitions at the Arthur Newton Gallery of New York City or at a retrospective at the Anna L. Werbe Galleries of Detroit in 1964.

But for all, those who haven't seen his art and those would like to see it again, there will be three different exhibits: Oakland County Galleria on the County complex in Pontiac, Feb. 2 through March 15; Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Feb. 21 through April 10 where he is one of three Michigan artists featured in the exhibition, "New Deal Government Art of the 1930s and 1940s"; and the atrium of Detroit's Millender Center, "Detroit Memories, circa 1930-1940," March 11-30.

Sorting through a huge body of work in preparation for these shows are Herzberg's daughter, Jo-Anne Westerby of Troy, herself an artist, filmmaker and writer and his granddaughter, Tina Herzberg of Bloomfield Township, a marketing specialist. For the past five months, the two have been unpacking canvases, sketches and drawings that have been stored at Westerby's house. She contacted her three brothers, the widows of two others and her sisters to see if they wanted some of theirs to be exhibited.

"I'm really anxious to see it altogether," Westerby said, adding that her father spent his entire life as an artist and the amount of work

that was divided among his seven children is substantial.

As a result, Westerby is rediscovering her father's art and Herzberg, who never knew him because he died in 1960 at 74, is meeting him via his art for the first time.

WESTERBY SAID, "He used to say I believe I was meant to be an artist and that's all he ever did."

She said he did open an art school, "The Detroit School of Fine and Applied Arts" in the Bonstelle Theater Building in 1922, and operated it for 12 years.

"Sarkis (Sarkisian) and (Zellon) Zepeshy were two of the teachers — but he wasn't a very good businessman."

From 1938 to 1942, Herzberg was an artist with the Detroit branch of the Works Progress Administration, and was allowed to go anywhere in the city and paint anything he wished. Many of his studies for murals will be in the County Galleria show, most depicting historical events. In some there is evidence of his interest in Diego Rivera and the murals, which he did at Detroit Institute of Arts.

Westerby said that Christine Nelson Ruby, curator of the "New Deal" exhibition at Kresge Museum feels her father was "more independent" than the other WPA artists. He also appears to be a visionary in the Rivera sense of the word.

Westerby said her father was especially happy during his five years with the circus. "He was in his 50s and he went specifically to paint the circus. In his school years (Chicago Art Institute and Art Students League of New York), he worked back stage as stagehand and set designer and he saw the large animal acts at the Hippodrome. He loved performing people and he

worked there for the love of it. We didn't see much of him during those years, he was everywhere painting. He said you should only work at what you would pay to be allowed to work at."

MANY OF HIS CIRCUS paintings, done with a thin oil wash on canvas, will be in the show at the County Galleria. In the last five years of his life, he discovered Europe. Westerby said he would get free passage on the luxury liners for sitting by the pool and doing sketches of the passengers. "He went to Spain and France and in Spain one summer, he abandoned his car and walked from village to village . . . He contacted up with Katherine Hepburn while she was filming "Summertime" and was actually in the movie as an artist sketching."

He sketched Hepburn and many other celebrities such as Milton Berle, Greta Welles, Gloria Swanson, Clare Booth Luce and Frank Murphy supreme court justice and former governor. He did hundreds of portraits of notable Detroiters including a series in the 1930s on Detroit Business Women.

For the County Galleria show, Herzberg's mural studies will be on the first floor and his paintings, which depict "Circus Life In and Around the Big Top" will be on the second. At the 4-8 p.m. reception on Thursday, Feb. 4, one of Herzberg's granddaughters, who inherited a love of clowns from her artist/grandfather, will be in full clown costume.

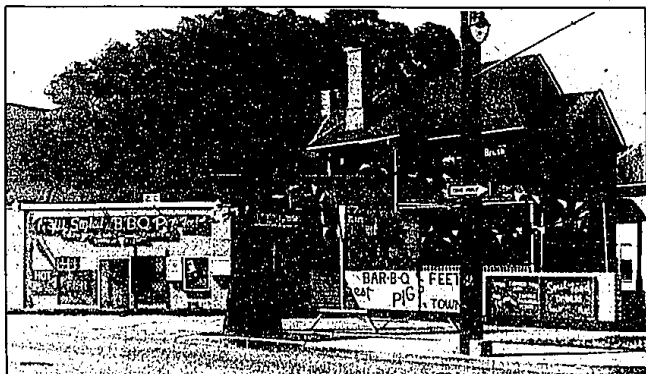
Some of the art will be shown from photographs made from Herzberg's original glass slides. Many of the pieces will be for sale.

The County Galleria is in the Executive Office Building on the complex at 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.



Mural study, oil on illustration board, isn't signed or dated, but the artist's daughter said it was done during the Depression.

Urban paintings done with warmth, affection



The now-defunct pink-bricked market on Brush and Bethune is the subject of this painting by Don Jacot. It is oil on canvas, 26 by 18

By Marion Melgaard
special writer

It is interesting and somehow heartening that several of the artists in Xochipilli Gallery owner Mary Wright's talented stable have had little or no formal art training.

Desirable though a degree may be, Don Jacot's oil canvases and gouache drawings of urban Detroit are tangible proof that this is not necessarily a prerequisite. This unassuming artist freely admits that his training consists of two classes in drawing by Mel Ross, instructor at Wayne State university and prominent Detroit artists.

Jacot's clarity of brushwork might seem close to, but should not be confused with, the more flashy genre of airbrush photorealism. His realistic, unglamorized subjects are painted with a precision of detail which no photographic enlargement could possibly match and which reflects a richness of visual stimuli within a historical framework.

Appropos the historical significance, Jacot wryly remarked, "It seems that shortly after I've painted a building it often gets pulled down." As in Edward Hopper and Richard

Estes's urban paintings, there is a sense of stillness in Jacot's work. The largest canvas, "Quiet City," 6-by-8-feet, is a Sunday morning scene of the corner of Congress and Randolph, where the tall buildings take on a lonely majesty, devoid of people or moving traffic.

ONE IS AGAIN reminded of Estes's use of light in "Entrance to the Fisher Building," in which the dark tones of the cathedral-like interior are illuminated by pools of brilliant light.

Jacot has a penchant for discovering less familiar sites. Despite the tawdriness of scabrous walls and decay, there is warmth, affection and humor, as well as history, in the depiction of a now-defunct, pink-bricked market on Brush and Bethune selling soul food dinners and "The Best Bar-B-Q Pig Feet in Town." This is true of the young man reclining on a possibly match and which reflects a richness of visual stimuli within a historical framework.

Born in Chicago 38 years ago, the artist has lived in Detroit for the past 12 years, working as a physician's assistant. He said that although he drew extensively as a child, his interest in art was revived about seven years ago when he saw an exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts featuring charcoal copies of, among others, photographs by Wheeler, Walker Evans, Lewis Hine and Berenice Abbott. He now makes the images from his own photographs.

"BUT I AM NOT a slave to photographs," he said. "Where necessary I add, subtract or alter perspective and color to interpret the image. I am not a very good photographer," he continued, "and I still have a lot to learn about art. Like Detroit, my work is still in a state of transition."

Such modesty is perhaps uncalculated. According to Wright, who immediately recognized his extraordinary natural talent, Jacot's works, still very reasonably priced, are sold before or as soon as they are hung.

Don Jacot's "Detroit Landscapes" continues at Xochipilli Gallery, 558 N. Woodward, Birmingham, through Feb. 20. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.