



Fran Larsen's sculpture is based on her paintings with negative spaces cut out.

## Former Michigan artists discover the Southwest

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

It's hard to believe that Fran and Hal Larson have ever lived anywhere but Santa Fe, N.M. Their combined exhibition at Rubiner Gallery of West Bloomfield really captures the heart and soul of the beautiful, colorful Southwest.

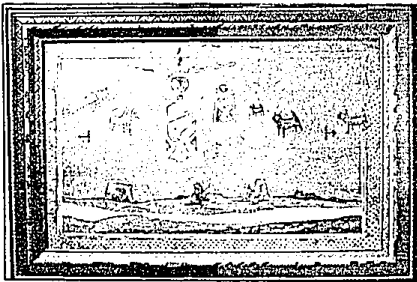
In his 1986 Rubiner show, his landscapes were elegant depictions of the terrain, the rich strata and the lonely, sculptural buttes against brilliant skies. He's still doing these, but in a new group of large abstracts, he captures the spirit and culture of the people who have lived for centuries in this part of the world.

Instead of painting the kachina dancer, he brings the excitement and emotion generated by the performer to his work.

One exciting Hal Larson abstract triptych is based on a fragment of an Indian blanket, in fact he's doing a series on these fragments. The move into abstracts gives him an opportunity to use a broader, deeper range of emotions as well as colors.

FRAN LARSON, who didn't exhibit in the 1986 show, said, "I went through this long metamorphosis. Now, I'm much more involved with color and personal allegory."

Along with several of her paintings of pueblos and the adobe architecture of the Southwest, which she has been doing successfully for some time, she's showing works and ideas that have come together recently. She paints her frames in a folk art style so they become an extension of the painting, making



Fran Larson's brilliant watercolor with the decorated frame shows the family pot, Pogo, chasing airplanes.

each painting and frame a unified blend of ideas and colors.

The Larsons have spent a lot of time visiting the pueblo communities, watching the ceremonies and taking pictures.

"We just bought a video camera, some pueblos will not allow you to photograph. But, pueblos are immensely fascinating places. They are fighting so hard to keep their values from being overrun by our values . . . we have so much to learn from them."

As a result of all of this exposure to the culture of the Indian, she is involved in stronger story telling in her paintings. Their late beloved, carin terrier, Pogo, who chased airplanes, is in many of her paintings — visiting the pueblo in one, chasing airplanes in another.

All of these paintings have many symbols of their life, which have a commonality to the lives of many people. She paints in watercolor, but because she works in a layering technique, the colors are strong and vibrant.

"I never presketch," she said. "I draw right onto the board and then go directly to color. There are lots of layers."

She is also showing a group of painted wood figurative, hinged sculptures. "These are my paintings with just the negative images cut out. I call them folded paintings . . . They are very interesting to do, they are painted differently on each side. They are cut out of birch — nine-ply Baltic birch."

Because they are hinged, these colorful works can be arranged in a

Staff photos by Jerry  
Zolynsky

variety of positions.

BECAUSE BOTH careers are flourishing, they have had to expand their studio space. "We have built a 1,200-square-foot studio for Hal," she said. "I have all the in-house studio space. We have always worked right next to each other. It is wonderful standing in the same room with him watching things come together."

She paused a moment and then continued, "We are so fortunate. We are among the most fortunate of humans . . . one idea leads to another just like a child's fantasy world."

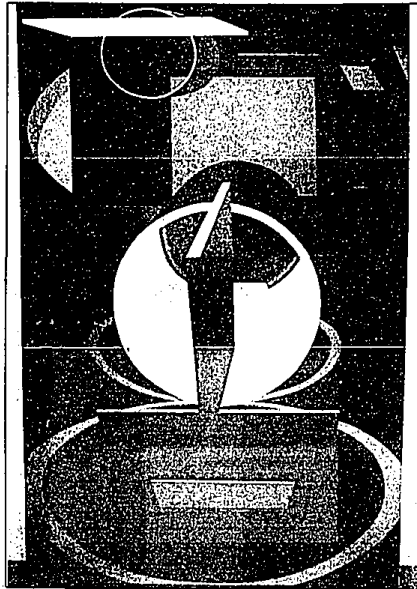
Both said they hardly remember the years when they lived in Michigan. They moved to Santa Fe nine years ago.

"We were risk takers," he said.

"There's stuff out there that's unreal," she said. "We just did it (move) at the right time. I wouldn't like to be 25 today and starting my career."

"They have two children in their 20s, Ted and Kristin. He does prismacolor drawings and she paints on pottery. Parents and children will have a show of their work at the art museum in St. Joseph in July."

The show at Rubiner Gallery continues through Friday, May 27. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and until 5 p.m. Saturday, 7001 Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield.



Acrylic on canvas, 48 by 30 inches, by Al Held is titled "Nectaurus IV."

## Held probes deep space

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

Geometric forms are the letters in Al Held's art alphabet. And like alphabet characters, they become a vocabulary when they are combined with others.

In Held's massive acrylic paintings, on display at Donald Morris Gallery of Birmingham through May 28, it is the intense interaction of the circles, rectangles, planes, cylinders and arcs with their precise form, vivid color and hard edge that creates a unique totality.

It is Held's skill in creating three-dimensional space with color, form, line and perspective that gives some of the paintings such as "Vaporium V" and "Vaporium VI" great depth with wonderful light at the end of the tunnel of squared frames.

The complicated arrangement of his geometric skeletal forms with intricate color relationships play mind and eye games with the viewer, looking at moments like the rafters of an unfinished attic or the steel girders of a building under construction and eventually like new world landscapes.

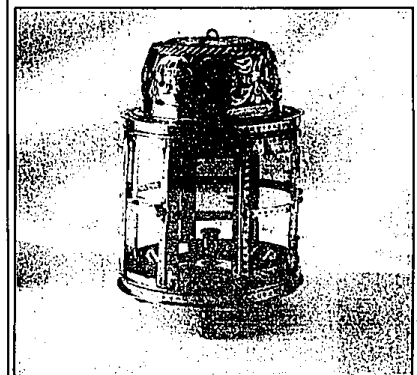
IN THE SERIES, Nectaurus IV, V, VI, VII, VIII the red plane set on end is an aggressive element (not as much in "Nectaurus VIII" in which the red is more of a burgandy). The circles, arches and triangles shift from being receding and advancing elements. Forms overlap, intersect, resolve and separate. The colors as well advance and recede. All this creates tension and excitement.

Only in "Vaporium V and VI" is there a place to look that is peaceful to the senses, and in these there is an oasis of soft color and light.

"East End" seems to belong to that group, but it leaves many questions unanswered. This one appears so much like a deserted cityscape that it is difficult to look at it as pure abstract. Perhaps it is the light blue around the edges of one inner frame, the shooting neon blue lines and the arches that make it seem appear as a place that had or has people.

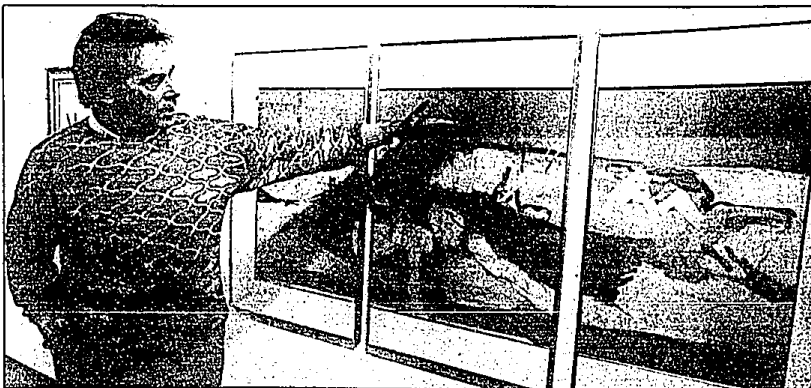
It is tempting to read things like this into Held's work and that, in a sense, is a travesty. To try to read too much into any of these works is to immediately limit them, to put

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### Old is beautiful

The Village Antiques Show, considered one of the tops in the country, is at Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. This c.1760 Dutch brass lantern is one of many pieces being shown by the 47 dealers from Maine to California. Clement E. Conger, curator of the diplomatic reception rooms for the U.S. Department of State, will give a lecture at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Museum's theater. A Young Collectors Booth is a special attraction. Preview for patrons and benefactors is this evening.



Hal Larson talks about his abstract triptych, which is a new direction, but still reminiscent of his panoramic landscapes.