

Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



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(F1E)

Dee Knott lets us see a beautiful, gentle world



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

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Dee Knott's watercolors could make instant collectors out of a lot of surprised people, especially the kind who like art, but claim they can take it or leave it. There's something magical her paintings, something hard to forget.

Her subject area is wide. She paints people, particularly old ones such as her 103-year-old Aunt Mini, and boats and flowers. She was just elected to membership in the American Society of Marine Artists, a group that gets very fussy about details such as rigging. She is proud to have been elected to membership in the American Watercolor Society who are equally picky about who they invite in.

These and many other honors are hardly rare for this woman from Farmington, who wanted to be an artist since she was a small child, but never actually met any until she grew up.

She's been a full-time studio artist since 1970, gradually building a group of clients who like her work well enough to buy at least one new painting each year.

HER PAINTINGS could be habit forming. Her work brings Andrew Wyeth's to mind, which is not to say she isn't truly her own person.

"I love boats," she said. "I have a real affinity for water. Put me beside the ocean, I don't even need

food. There's something mystical about sailboats. Each day I walk to Flushing, I walk along the river."

That reminded her of a trip she and her husband made to Vancouver and the state of Washington.

"Walking along the beach on the West Coast was just awesome. The beach at the furthestmost corner of Washington is unforgettable. Everything had a golden cast, it was surrealistic. When I got so involved, I cry. Every two feet, there was something I wanted to paint. It's so frustrating. I followed a beautiful old lady for two hours on the street. I love old people."

She recalled when their sons were small (they're in college now) she and her husband took them to Nova Scotia. "I wanted to stop every 20 feet," she said with a smile. "I love things that are all backlit. The key to everything is light. Everything I'm attracted to has a strong light source."

Like color, she uses light in her art in a subtle way. She layers her paintings, wipes parts away, builds others up and in the process builds a lovely translucent quality. She may use a hundred variations of one soft color, yet the delineation is remarkable. All of this technical skill is coupled with an outpouring of emotion that draws the viewer into the work like a magnet.

In a statement about her art, she writes, "During the time I'm actually painting I'm in a different

world. I am unaware of time and space. It's moment after moment of hard work and urgency. I have no exact way of beginning a painting, nor finishing a painting. Each moment ahead is an unknown. But, it's in those unknowns where discoveries are made. During each one of those intense moments I feel as if I've never painted before."

WHEN SHE SEES a scene she wants to remember (and she does at every step in the road), she sketches and photographs. Then, when she goes to paint, she refines the idea and puts her personal vision into the work. She wrote an excellent description of what happens in a well-illustrated article published in the Nov. 1985 issue of *The Artist's Magazine*.

She will bring the same vision to the painting which she will do for the album cover for her friend, Cleo Laine's new record for RCA. She met Laine about 11 years ago.

She had written the entertainer to tell her that during a very hard time of her life, Laine's music was the only thing she could relate to. Laine responded, inviting her to come backstage when she and John Dankworth were at Meadow Brook Music Festival. Laine is now one of her collectors. Knott and her husband visited Laine and Dankworth in a little village north of London three years ago.

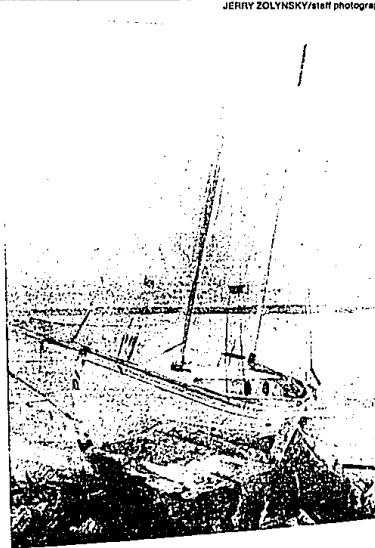
"Cleo was a real integral force in my life," she said.

Dee Knott, above, beside the painting of her dear Aunt Mini who died just before her 103rd birthday. At right is Knott's painting of the site of the only boat works that was left in Charlevoix. Now, she said, it is full of condos.

Knott has a classically beautiful face with dramatic high cheekbones and a wide fluff of curly black, shoulder length hair. She is very trim and was dressed in a black pants outfit. She is soft spoken and intense with deep brown eyes. She has about 25 watercolors in the show and is adamant about never having any multiples made from her watercolors. She is very much the genuine thing and so is her art.

Knott is represented in the National Watercolor Society's First Half-Century Collection as well as in the National 4-H Building of Washington D.C., General Motors Corporation, Wausau Insurance Company, Utah State University, Ferris State University, Albion College, Saginaw Art Museum and Walt Disney Corporation collections among many others.

Her exhibition continues through June 18. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and until 4 p.m. Saturday, 755 W. Big Beaver, Suite 131, Troy.



Showhouse — a first

Birmingham Community Women's Center's first designer showhouse, "Gem of a House" in Carillon Hills on Long Lake in Bloomfield Hills, is open through June 12.

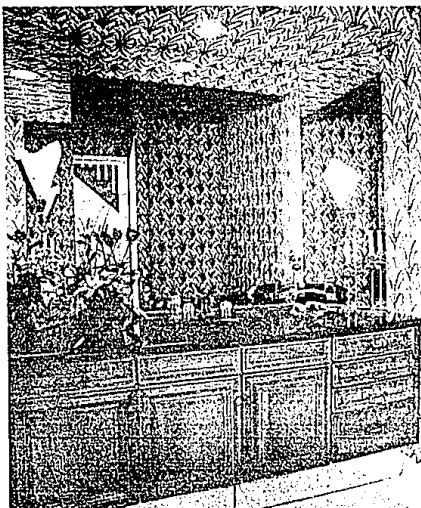
The use of gemstone colors as a theme for the rooms including ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz, aquamarine — may make a lot of people think or look twice.

Instead of the muted monochromatic backgrounds that are so prevalent, the rooms in this house by Bosco Building Inc., are done with brilliant wall coverings against natural wood paneling, cove molding, dental molding, fluted pilasters and six panel doors. It's more of a European look — a long way from the palette of California and Southwest styles.

Participating designers are: Joan Bawden of Joan Bawden Interiors, kitchen; Ann Brasch of Clutter Control, master-bedroom closet; Linda Bruce and Laurie Burt of Curiosity Shoppe Ltd., library; Pat Purcell of Englanders, dining room.

Also, P.K. Fields of P.K. Fields Interiors, bed and bath; Kaye Bauman of Jeff Fontana Designs, in-law suite; Mary Grimaldi of Inside-Out, powder room; Sheila Hall of She Interiors and Nancy Laube of Laube Interiors, designer retreat; Beverly Pierson and Kasey Pierson of Pierson Interiors, master bedroom; Kathy McCreight and Joe Bloche of Puffs Interiors, back hall, bath and utility room; and Pam Edwards and Carol Kulcher of Town and Country, living room.

The house is 4,500 square feet. It has four bedrooms, 5½ baths, living room, formal dining room and library. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are available at the showhouse, all Ticketmaster outlets or by calling the Women's Center, 642-1132. There is a boutique and a



tea room. Art by members of the Creative Council is displayed in the foyer, in some of the other rooms and in the boutique.

Long Lake is closed west of Telegraph. Take Franklin Road to Long Lake, turn east, pass the go-through traffic sign and watch for Carillon Hills on the south side of Long Lake, opposite Kirk in the Hills.



Library, above, is the work of Linda Bruce and Laurie Burt of Curiosity Shoppe, Ltd. The rich dark emerald wall covering sets an elegant tone. At left is a cozy, dramatic corner of the in-law suite in shades of teal by Kaye Bauman of Jeff Fontana Designs.

Staff photos
by Jerry
Zolynsky