

## Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



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## Sybil Oshinsky

### She paints visual autobiography

By Manon Melgaard  
special writer

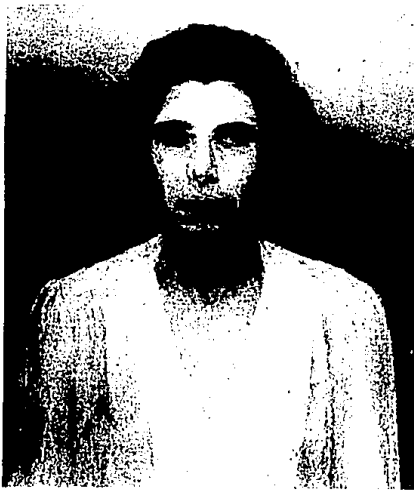
Viewing 19 Sybil Oshinsky oil and watercolor self-portraits massed together in one gallery room is a moving experience.

By using her face and body as a personal amalgam, the Birmingham artist has created a succinct, over 20-year chronicle of one person's shifts in human, physical and artistic development. Because she works slowly and meticulously on each piece, it is unusual to see more than one or two of her paintings in any particular show.

At the Hillberry Gallery in Birmingham, a solo exhibit that has been planned for years comes together beautifully. It is well worth the wait.

Oshinsky has said that she paints herself often because she is her own most available model. She portrays her strong, mobile face with an objective, almost merciless honesty. Walking slowly through the self-gallery is like going on a journey through the vocabulary of the human psyche. Some of the faces are contemplative; some have the merest hint of a smile or an aura of mystery; others express anxiety, vulnerability or quiet grief.

HER EARLIEST portraits, which go back to the beginning of the 1960s, have a youthful, energized quality. There's Sybil eating an onion, a serious Sybil playing the violin and a marvelous, a foreshortened nude study that is like an early Georges Rouault. Many of these were made during the period she studied painting at Wayne State University, 1965-1973. In later portraits, Oshinsky dispenses with props and places the focus directly on the face. One is reminded of the Sibylla or Sibyl in Greek mythology, who was given the gift of prophecy. In the 1976, 30 by 10 inch watercolor, where she wears a headdress of white veiling.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/tat photographer

Recent self-portrait by Sybil Oshinsky is one of many done over a 20-year period that chronicle physical as well as attitudinal changes.

The look is visionary, penetrating, slightly androgynous. In another, a chalky, white face against a white background gazes down into its own reflection.

Perhaps the most riveting of the self-portraits is an unfinished oil she has been working on and changed many times during the past 14 years. (Gallery owner Su-

zanne Hillberry showed at least four slides of quite extraordinary versions that have now been erased or painted over.)

In this, layerings of black background incorporating a black dress create a strong contrast to a spectral, white and glowing face (unfaded) and a pair of superbly painted hands (hopefully completed).

Measurements and lines on the canvas are clues to the next stage or final completion of a work that is already so haunting and ethereal that to finish it might almost be a pity.

SHE WORKS EQUALLY well in both oil and watercolor. Her oils are built up with thin layers of pigment rather than with heavily impasted gestures. With watercolor, which lately seems to be her preferred medium, she achieves an incandescence of skin tone and, for example, the pearly glow of a white blouse, that is more commonly associated with oil. Colors are usually muted, enlivened with brilliant patches, like the patterning of a curtain or the scarlet fingernails of one of her sitters.

Not all the works are self-portraits in this 35-piece exhibit. There are portraits of friends and relatives and a few delightfully uncluttered still-lives.

A verification of Oshinsky's skill in capturing the essence as well as the outward likeness of a person was the presence of one of her sitters, artist Richard Brooks, whose portrait was on the wall and who happened to be in the gallery at the time of this viewing. The person was immediately identifiable with the painting.

"Sybil is very painstaking as well as honest," he said. "The sitting sessions took a long, long time, but we had some interesting discussions while these were going on. At first I couldn't see anything of myself in what she was doing. Then, suddenly it all snapped into place. She (Oshinsky) gave me a big hug and said, 'I think I've got it right.'"

Getting it exactly right seems to be prerequisite of this very fine artist.

The exhibition continues through July 30 at the Suzanne Hillberry Gallery, 555 South Woodward, Birmingham. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.



Conductor Neal Stulberg has the pleasant task of figuring out how he will spend the \$50,000 award, which he will receive over the next couple of years.

## Conductor's potential seen as significant

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

Imagine you were chosen one of the three people in the country to have the potential for a significant career. Imagine that because of that you were given a \$50,000 award. How would you spend the money?

Former area resident and Groves High School (Birmingham) graduate Neal Stulberg doesn't have to imagine. It's already happened to him. He is one of three American conductors who received the Seaver/NEA Conductors Award for 1988. The other two are Catherine Comet, music director of the Grand Rapids Symphony and Jahja Ling, resident conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra. Stulberg, 34, is in his fourth season as music director of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra.

He said that while he will be consulting with the panel members who chose him, he does have some ideas about how he'll spend the money which will come to him over several years.

"I'd be very interested in spending extended amounts of time in Europe. An American trained conductor has access to such high standards of orchestral performance... but one of the disadvantages is not living in the land where much of the music was written."

HE SAID HE'D LIKE to spend time, for instance, in France, Italy, Hungary and Eastern Europe absorbing the life and culture and meeting the relatives of the composers. He said that while he doesn't speak Russian, the policy of glasnost in Russia opens some wonderful prospects of going to Russia.

The extended travel is a possibility because the New Mexico Symphony doesn't have a summer season.

He said another area that he would like to consider "is the opportunity to work with really great conductors such as Carlos Kleiber, Claudio Abbado, Leonard Bernstein and Kurt Sanderling, to name a few."

For a third consideration, he said, "I'm particularly interested in working with and observing conductors of music being played on 18th and 19th century original instruments — Roger Norrington, Trevor Pinnock, Nicolas McGegan and John Eliot Gardiner."

He continued: "Another interesting idea is to have a senior musician or conductor come to Albuquerque for a week to watch what we do." The name that immediately came to mind was Maurice Abravanel, who was music director of the Utah Symphony for 30 years and is responsible for building it into a highly respected orchestra which has been a great source of inspiration for many groups such as the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra.

Stulberg then said very seriously, "When a conductor wins such an award it is a major collaborative effort with the orchestra and the board of directors. I'd like to have a recording contract for the New Mexico Symphony."

That's an impressive wish list, but Stulberg is a man of action, who works hard and makes things happen.

"Over all those years, the seniors had put so much wax on it that I don't have to do a thing to it," he said.

The best for the house is conveyed by highly embossed terra-cotta contemporary metal radiators.

The Campus Treasure Shop is open from 2:30-5:15 p.m. Wednesday and the warehouse is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. most Saturdays and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays.

they left the keyboard. "At 3 he could play the Mozart sonata they played and hear the melodies and harmonies. He has a phenomenal ear."

She is a pianist with a bachelor's in music from the University of Michigan and the entire family is musical. "I wasn't very intent on him becoming a professional musician," she said, in spite of the fact that he had spent many summers at Interlochen music camp, studied viola with Ara Zerkounian, piano with Mischa Kottler and played with musical groups all through school.

Following high school, he entered a special social studies program at Harvard University, played chamber music there and conducted the Bach Society Orchestra this year. He won a year-long fellowship to study conducting at the Santa Cecilia Academy of Rome, earned his master's in conducting from the University of Michigan and continued his study at the Juilliard School of New York City.

Stulberg said: "I'm just very grateful to have had that kind of encouragement from my family, from my teachers, particularly Mischa Kottler. He is a very demanding teacher, but also a very affectionate teacher with a real understanding for teaching. From the time I was 5 until I went to college, I took a lesson from him every week. The city of Detroit is very lucky to have a person like him."

STULBERG'S CAREER has been meteoric. He was conductor of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra of Los Angeles and then was assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Carlo Maria Giulini. He served as resident conductor of the MIT Symphony Orchestra in Massachusetts and assistant conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra in New York.

He is a popular guest conductor and has been on the podium with the St. Louis Symphony, the New World Symphony of Miami, Fla. and Israel's Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra. He will conduct the Indianapolis, Utah, Tucson, and Pacific symphony orchestras and next April he will conduct the Utah Symphony from the keyboard.

As for programming, he said he likes to think his New Mexico audiences have come to expect "what is old and what is new."

He said when he brings new and contemporary works to the program he doesn't leave the audience without an explanation. "They're not left to swim in deep water. We try to have the composers with us. To lead (the) audience and to shape the taste of an audience, that's our job. If the audience is approached with a young spirit, these things can be overcome. The people of my generation are open to new sounds."

Judging from his programs for the year ahead, he introduces works outside the standard repertoire frequently.

The three 1988 awardees were selected from more than 90 nominees by a national panel, which evaluated them over a two-year period. Stulberg said they came to a number of his concerts. The Seaver/NEA Conductors Award is given every other year to American conductors who are judged to have demonstrated superior professional abilities and to have the potential for a significant career. The Seaver Institute is a Los Angeles foundation that gives grants to scientific, educational and arts programs.

Stulberg is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Stulberg of West Bloomfield.

## Collector/preservationist opens her home for Camp Cavell benefit

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

Marguerite Hague's enthusiasm for saving bits and pieces of old Detroit hasn't diminished at all in the last decade.

Of course, she'd rather save whole buildings, but she's adept at taking what she can get, making it accessible to others and adding to her own collection.

This determined woman with the friendly smile and bright, clear voice said, "I collect Detroit."

HER HOME, with the astounding collection she and her family have acquired over many years, will be open from 3-6 p.m. Sunday at a benefit for YWCA Camp Cavell.

The afternoon will include tours of the house and garden, an auction of antiques and collectibles, live jazz and refreshments. Tickets are available at the door, 53 Manor Road, Birmingham, one block south of Big Beaver and three houses east of Woodward. The tickets are \$15 per person or \$25 per couple.

This is the second year the Hagues have hosted the Detroit Memorial House Tour.

Hague's interest in sharing her appreciation of old, often broken and discarded things has long since gone beyond her own home. She is the founder and still manager of the Campus Treasure Shop, 5704-5714 Casa, midway between West Grand Blvd. and Warren. The Campus Treasure Shop Warehouse is at 4465 Second, three blocks south of Warren.

All profits from both go to Wayne State University, earmarked for campus beautification. So far, two major beautification projects have been completed.

IT IS Hague's derring-do (being 100 steps ahead of the wrecker's ball and the demolition crews), connections, ingenuity, fine eye, and know-how that helps keep both the shop and the warehouse packed floor to ceiling with doors, windows, paneling, hardware, fixtures, novel posts,



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/tat photographer

Marguerite Hague's green thumb and love of old things go hand in hand. All of the planters and plant stands have a history. The door wall behind her leads to a deck and garden filled with flowers and Victorian-era planters. The love seat in the foreground (left) is from one of the D&C boats, which piled the Detroit River. The bricks in the floor came from Detroit streets.

**Hague's interest in sharing her appreciation of old, often broken and discarded things has long since gone beyond her own home.**

cornice pieces and parts of almost everything related to construction of decades back.

Like the red Detroit scales that she has on her back porch, much of it initially is so encrusted with dirt and grime that it's difficult to imagine something attractive or useful is there to be uncovered. But Hague

can see beneath dirt and beyond original function.

The bricks in her utility room floor are from Monroe Street, the light fixture by the circular stairway from the old Michigan Bell Building, the two love seats in the family room from the D&C boats.

The plant stand with the wicker

fluted base (turned upside down) was once the pulpit in a downtown church, other plant stands were factory tables and the family room hardwood floor came out of an old elementary school.

"Over all those years, the seniors had put so much wax on it that I don't have to do a thing to it," she said.

The best for the house is conveyed by highly embossed terra-cotta contemporary metal radiators.

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