

# artifacts

## David Messing

**T**IS THE season for resolutions, fa la la la la . . . la la la la.

Me? Well, I'm going to lose weight and get my cholesterol level down. I'm going to sculpt and paint more. I'm going to travel more. Take better photographs. I'm even going to brush Tiffany, my standard poodle, every week at least until February.

I believe in goals. I must always have a goal. Did you ever hear the saying, "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time." I even need a deadline for artwork and writing. If I receive a commission and the customer says, "When you find the time," I interrupt and say, "No, I'm sorry, but I have to work on a deadline or pickup date." Why? Because I know me and "me" will never find the time.

"So I know 'me,' but do you know you?"

"Are you the artist who has for 10 years only worked a black and white one-color medium? Are you not who sells paintings but lacks background in the drawing media? Are you secretly afraid that you will be asked to draw people? Do you fear the commercial commission? Have you ever wondered about sculpture or anatomy but feared you weren't good enough?"

"Well, come on then, make some resolutions. Set some goals and then make the commitment. Remember the word commitment means 'no alternatives' or otherwise stated: Go for it!"

"What if all you need is a start? Maybe just finding a spot of your

### briefly speaking

#### SISSON GALLERY

"To Draw" is the theme of the visual art statements to be on exhibit in the Sisson Gallery at Henry Ford Community College, featuring work by artists John Hegarty, Jim Nawara and Peter Williams.

The show will close Jan. 18.

Hegarty treats the figure as a metaphor for man's confrontation with himself. The figures are nude, which strips them of their source of camouflage. Hegarty chooses to present the figure straight on and almost life-size.

Nawara explores the nuances of the landscape, which seem to hold

the mystery of nature for him. The landscape is sometimes viewed from above and sometimes straight on.

Williams, through the flight of his imagination, conveys in robust drawings a dialogue about his experiences as a black, as an artist and as a person in the urban environment of Detroit and his responsibilities to this environment.

All three teach at Wayne State University.

The gallery is on the campus of Henry Ford Community College, 5101 Evergreen. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily with additional hours 6-8 p.m. Tuesdays.

# Patchwork legacy

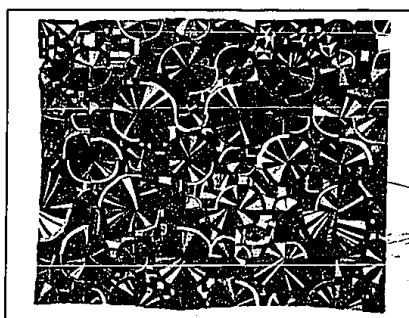
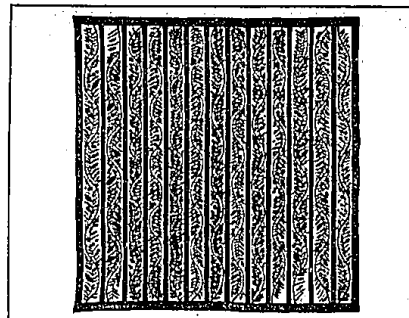
## McCord quilts in Ford museum exhibit

A kaleidoscope of color and design in the form of exquisitely crafted quilts now graces the halls of Henry Ford Museum. Created by the talented Susan McCord (1829-1909), the collection of 10 quilts is on exhibit through 1990.

The McCord quilts are prized for their quality workmanship and magnificent original designs. Constructed over four decades, the 10 pieces are a vivid representation of the life's work of a quilter. They include four pieced or patchwork quilts, three applique and three turn-of-the-century bedcovers known as "crazy quilts."

Knowing the creator of such a large collection is to the uniqueness of the quilts. According to Nancy Bryk, the museum's curator of domestic life, "Identifying the maker of quilts is nearly impossible since, unlike painters, quilters do not sign their work. For example, we have over 200 quilts in our collection and yet makers of only 20 of them are known," Bryk said. "Half of these are the McCord quilts." Two of the quilts were obtained from Susan's great-granddaughter in 1972 and the rest in 1973.

It is evident that Susan found inspiration for her designs in the vines, leaves and petals of her large garden. Two of her earliest creations, the applique "Harrison Rose Urn" (c. 1860) and "Fantasy Floral Urn" (c. 1860), contain stylized flowers of different species. Generally, applique quilts have identical borders along all sides; however, the innovative Susan McCord designed four different borders of trailing vines for each of the urn quilts.



RECOGNIZED AS A masterpiece, her "Vine" quilt (c. 1890) features the undulating vine motif as its only pattern. The vivid greens and pinks sparkling against a snow-white background consist of unused fabric scraps — pieces that are unfaded and still crisp with sizing and glazes. The quilt has hardly been used and likely never been washed. It appears that this magnificent vine quilt was constructed primarily for aesthetic and artistic, rather than utilitarian reasons.

Conversely, "Diamond Field" (1870-1900) is particularly well-used and well-washed. This quilt, along with "Ocean Waves" (c. 1875) and "Hexagon Mosaic" (c. 1895), are comprised of hundreds, even thousands, of scraps of color. In with her other quilts, they are devoid of any machine stitching.

Susan's originality is again expressed by the unusual border around the traditional pattern "Turkey Tracks" (c. 1870). Bold, contrasting stripes on opposite sides are joined by a third edge bedecked with grape bunches and striped leaves along a rippling vine. The fourth side is left without a border.

Around the age of 60, Susan began to sew "crazy quilts." The calico pieced and applique quilts may have been viewed by some as "old-fashioned" compared to late 19th-century bedcoverings. Most likely produced between 1885 and 1905, the three "crazy quilts" are made of sating flannels and dress velvets. Susan decorated them with fancy crosses and silk embroidery.

Susan Noakes McCord died of pneumonia in 1909 from lying in bed for a short time, but ultimately settled in McCordsville, a town just east of Indianapolis, founded by McCord's distant relatives. County histories portray Green McCord as an early settler and a prominent member of the community.

Susan's life and interests have been gleaned through family reminiscences. Described as a tiny bundle of energy, Susan gave birth to seven children (four of them survived to adulthood). She was a devoted member of the McCordville Methodist Episcopal Church. Like most farm wives, Susan was responsible for the homestead's dairy and poultry. She loved gardening and practiced homopathic medicine using plants, herbs and roots for healing.

Most notable was her skill with a needle. Not only did Susan make at least 12 quilts (two of which are privately owned), she also made clothing for her children and knitted accessories, embroidered bedspreads and produced decorative floral wreaths made of hair.

At the top, "Vines" (c. 1890) is recognized as a masterpiece. It is the most famous of McCord's quilts. The vine motif is composed of vivid green and pink cotton scraps against a snow-white background. The bottom quilt is "Wheels" (c. 1895). The wheel motif on this comforter top is an interpretation of the popular pieced quilt pattern, "Fan." The patches are joined with featherstitching, but it remains without filler or backing.

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