

Creative Living

More in Sec. F



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JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Susan Lyman's three-dimensional forms from tree branches are directly related to her interest in drawing. As the artist at work, she bends, dyes and re-shapes what she finds in nature.

Art improves on nature

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

THE DEVELOPMENT of Susan Lyman's sculpture, on display at Robert Kidd Gallery of Birmingham through June 3, is a fascinating pictorial saga.

The dramatic change in her work can be documented in the three exhibits she has had at Kidd Gallery — from baskets and basket forms in 1981 to skeletal and partly sheathed forms two years later to her present show of lean-line, organic-oriented sculptures.

"I'm taking the paper skin off. They're more organic, they're more geometric. I'm paring them down," she said.

Her medium is tree branches which she peels, colors, whittles, shapes and glues together. Through all this by-hand process, the organic feel of the material remains along with some hint of or play on function.

The most notable change in concept of the new works is the use of her materials to define space to enclose and/or accentuate it. The qual-

ity of the workmanship is such that the materials she has shaped, bent and doweled or glued seem completely natural in the refined form.

SHE HAS ENHANCED her medium and created a form which seems destined to see the light of day and make the environment more attractive.

One which began in her mind as a possible table base eventually lost all but the barest suggestion of that idea. Another she saw at first as a chair, but the chair form is little more than a vague, playful memory. The tall one, with sharp pointed sticks inserted into its main spine, is named "Hall tree," and Lyman said she wouldn't care if someone hung a hat on one of the spikes, "I like having an object or a natural form work as a reference point," she said. "Hall tree" is cherry and maple.

When she applies color it is Swedish dye sealed with Minwax and butcher's wax. The table base form just evolved as she took two long limbs and kept shaping and mitering until she was satisfied with the form.

While friends collect and deliver lots of wood to her, she likes to use

freshly cut pieces because they are easier to work and shape. She'd like to find a Chinese corkcreeper willow because she loves the shape of the branches. She likes working with poplar, uses some hardwoods such as cherry and some unusual ones such as bittersweet.

LYMAN SEES THESE current pieces as an extension of drawing which she studied at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and continues to do.

She grew up in the Birmingham Bloomfield Hills area, completed a master's in fine art at University of Michigan in 1976 and is visual program coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center at Provincetown, Ma. where she lives with her husband and 18 month old son, Sam.

An exhibit of paintings by Canadian artist, Adele Duck is in the main gallery, Kidd Gallery, 107 Townsend, Birmingham, is open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

This sculpture of bittersweet, cherry and poplar — and subtly colored — is titled "Song bird."



Singer says Carmen role takes stamina

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

Cleopatra Ciurca looks exactly like the illusive Spanish gypsy Carmen would — with long, naturally curly black hair, enormous brown eyes and a smooth olive complexion.

Her unpretentious sense of humor and receptive smile exempts her from being accused of the gypsy's flirtatious and deceptive nature.

This week she is singing her first "Carmen" in the United States in the Michigan Opera Theatre's production at Masonic Temple. This is a role she is known for in Europe and will soon debut at the Vienna State Opera.

"I take an abstract concept of Carmen and try to place emphasis on the color in my voice to bring out the dramatic aspects," she said.

Ciurca talked in Italian through interpreter Joseph De Rugerila, who wrote the subtitles for MOT's recent production of "Norma." She speaks English, but returns to Italian for involved explanations. She also speaks French and her native Romanian "best of all."

"I don't want to seem pretentious," she said.

CIURCA MAY not want to seem pretentious, but she is one of the few mezzo-sopranos today who is singing "Carmen" successfully besides Victoria Vergara who sang the role for MOT in 1981.

"It takes great stamina to sing this role especially during the second act," Ciurca said.

During Act II, Carmen is on stage singing during most of the action.

CIURCA IS a French citizen, but was born, raised and trained in Bucharest, Romania. Her parents still live there but she and her sister, Smaranda, a pharmacist, now live in Paris.

"It wasn't hard to decide to live in Paris. France is less bureaucratic than Italy and it was easier to get French citizenship. Spain is the only country in Europe that I have not visited," she said coyly.

"But I trained with a Spaniard in Paris to do things like the castanets before I did the part. Spaniards are everywhere. You can always find a Spaniard to help you."

Ciurca believes life in Romania has changed since she left in 1980 and doesn't talk about it. She is proud of the disciplined education she received.

"I was a mathematician and physicist before I decided to be a singer," she said. "If I had not been accepted into the Bucharest Conservatory, who knows, I might



Cleopatra Ciurca will sing the role of Carmen with the Michigan Opera Theater for the third time at 8 p.m. Saturday. Isola Jones will take over the role for the matinee at 2 p.m. Sunday.

have become an astronaut."

SHE ENTERED the conservatory late, at 19, and studied there for five years. The opera workshops were in the original language of the operas, but when Ciurca sang "Carmen" at the Bucharest Opera it was in Romanian.

"We were the subtitles," she said, making another joke. "We did not have any translations above the stage like here."

Asked why she thinks so many of the world's large voices are Romanian or Bulgarian, Ciurca said she doesn't know.

"Perhaps it is the climate. I think that Romanians are most likely to be basses or mezzos and likely seems to produce more tenors and sopranos."

CIURCA HAS a wide range of parts in her repertoire besides the gypsy roles of Carmen, Maddalena and Amneca. She sings Adalgisa ("Norma"), Marina ("Boris Godunov"), Amneris ("Aida") and Princess Eboli ("Don Carlo").

In Verdi's hometown she won first prize at the Verdi International Voice Competition in 1981, and in Rio de Janeiro she placed first for the best interpretation of Brazilian music in 1979. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1984 as Olga in "Eugene Onegin."

She said the new theater in Detroit will offer MOT badly needed in-theater time to rehearse the way as done in Europe, but otherwise she thinks the American opera officials are highly professional.

"I like the American audiences. They are very warm and spontaneous," she said.

Watercolors delight the eyes and spirit

Watercolors by Marjorie Hecht Simon convey her feelings of joy for life. Her subjects are garden scenes, people scenes and flower still lifes. Her paintings are on display at Rubiner Gallery, 7001 Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield, through June 1. There are 35 paintings in her one-person exhibit and 17 are 40-by-60 inches. Many were inspired by her visits to England, the Mediterranean coast and other parts of the world. She is an avid gardener with a deep appreciation for flowers. The still life at far right is "Cap Ferrat," 29-by-41 inches. The other is "Forest Garden, England," 40-by-60 inches. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

