

Small vista becomes a tour de force

By Corinne Abalt
staff writer

Karen Wydra may be one of the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association's greatest success stories. Not that there aren't a lot, but certainly with the opening of her one-person show at Rubler Gallery of West Bloomfield April 9, she's right up there with the best.

In her 15 large-scale oil still lifes in the show, the biggest running to 5 feet, she explores the effect of light on a rather fascinating assortment of items — prisms, marbles, printed and plain fabric, pottery, glass bottles, apples, oranges, and antique jugs and a mirror.

In doing so, particularly with the marbles and the glass, she finds worlds within other worlds as light bends, distorts, flattens round objects, changes amber to pink and catches bits of color, even reflecting things not in the picture plane.

"I've been interested in marbles for a long time. When I look at a marble, I see a whole universe inside," she said.

ONE of the largest and newest paintings in the show is an arrangement of marbles with a prism on a black surface.

"When I look at a marble, I see a whole universe inside."
— Karen Wydra
artist

"I love the stark pieces," she said as she stood before this one. "The thing with reflections is how everything affects its neighbor."

She pointed out that one of the reflections is of a marble that is out of the picture.

"I have put reflections in most all of my work in the last two years."

SHE HASN'T given up her earlier more traditional still life style, which has served her so well for the past few years, but she does seem to keep increasing the demands on herself with these.

When she takes these small vistas and turns them into broad ones, she may use extremely subtle shifts in the tones of a single color, such as the still life in which all the elements but a green vase have a shade of violet in them. Yet, it's hardly apparent until she points it out.

The still life with the brown apothecary jar "is really a painting

about the neutrality of color," she said.

Wydra has a degree in commercial art from the University of Illinois that she never used. She took classes at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association for seven years from Russell Keeter.

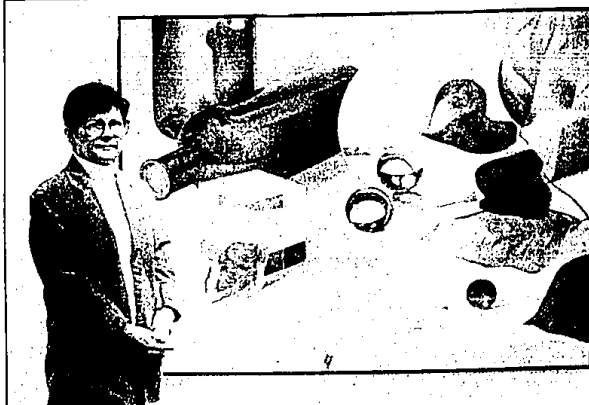
"I learned so much from him . . . I only did figures with him," she said with a smile.

Later she studied with John Heggerly, another well-known Michigan figure painter.

FOR SEVERAL years, she has been teaching painting at the Art Association, and has students who take her classes over and over as she did Keeter's. She doesn't specify beginners or advanced in her class because "you can spend years in the basics and become a better painter."

She's proof of that statement. Her paintings illustrate how a half a dozen objects in a still life can present as magical an effect as mountains in the mist or a stormy coastline.

Karen Wydra's show continues through May 3. The next regular session lasts 6-7 p.m. at Borders-Birmingham.
From 7:30-8:30 p.m. today, catch O'Brien at Borders-Novi, where he'll read and discuss "The Things They Carried."
Friday at 7:30 p.m., the "Talk About Poetry" winter series concludes with a talk on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe by Wayne State University professor, Ben Stages. The presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Poetry Resource Center in the International Institute, Detroit. Call 972-5580.
Sponsored by the Hopwood Program, poet Robert Hass will read from his work and present the Hopwood lecture on Tuesday, April 23 at 3:30 p.m. in the Rackham Auditorium at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. For details, call 764-6295.
At 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 24, A. Whitney Brown of "Saturday Night Live" drops in at Borders-Novi to sign copies of "The Big Pic-



Karen Wydra stands beside her still-life painting with the brown apothecary jar — a work, she says, that's about the neutrality of color.

JERRY ZOLVINSKY/VAIF photographs

Bookworms can sample a variety of activities

A sampling of upcoming events of interest to book people:

Today at Borders-Birmingham noon to 1:30 p.m., baseball great Mickey Mantle will sign copies of his recently published book, "My Favorite Summer." Written with sports journalist Phil Pepe, the book chronicles the 1955 season, when the Okla-

homa Yankee, after hitting the most home runs, knocking in the most runs and finishing with the highest batting average in baseball, received the first of his three MVP awards.

Also today, Tim O'Brien, recipient of the 1978 National Book Award for "Going After Cacciato," will sign his latest book, "The Things

They Carried," a fictionalized Vietnam memoir. The next regular session lasts 6-7 p.m. at Borders-Birmingham.

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book break
Victoria Diaz

ture," a compilation of his TV editorials.

Area poets Mitzi Alvin, Kathleen Leo, and Skip Renker will read from their work at Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Rochester Hills on Friday, April 26. Readings begin at 7 p.m. Call 853-9855 for more information.

Popular Detroit author William K. Klein will autograph copies of his 13th Father Koecker mystery, "Chameleon," at Barnes & Noble on Saturday, April 27, 2-3:30 p.m.

The New Morning School of Plymouth will conduct workshops at Borders-Novi on Children's Journalism (April 27), and Binding

Books At Home (May 4). For parent-child pairs, sessions are 10-11 a.m. Registration is now under way. Call 347-0780.

Carl Sandburg Library in Livonia continues "Voices and Visions," its free series of video-lecture-discussion programs on American poets. Participants will explore the work of Langston Hughes on May 1, and the poetry of Sylvia Plath on May 15. Videotape showings begin at 6 p.m., lecture and discussion at 7 p.m. Discussions are led by Dr. James Reilly and Dr. Ernest Nolan of Madonna University. Call 476-0700 to register.

At exactly 11 a.m. on May 4, kids 3-7 can eggsplore the egg, at Halfway Down the Stairs Children's Book Shop in Rochester. Eggcellent stories will be read, eggsting experiments conducted, and, with luck, some baby chicks might even make an appearance, too.

Also at Halfway Down the Stairs, the second annual Make Way For Ducklings Parade (for kids 7-ish

and younger) will take place May 18, starting at 11 a.m. The event will begin with a reading of Robert McCloskey's classic duck tale, followed by a sidewalk parade to the park to feed feathered friends. Call 652-8066 for information.

The ever-popular annual Book and Author Luncheon, sponsored by the Detroit News, is scheduled this year for May 20 at Fairlane Manor in Dearborn. Festivities begin at noon. Speakers will be Scott Turow, S.K. Wolf, Michael Dorris, and Louise Erdrich, no less. As always, a book-signing session is scheduled after lunch. Call 222-8848.

At Borders-Novi, registration begins May 25 for a seminar on writing and publishing children's books, to be held June 23 from 6:30-8 p.m. Book buyer Ruta Drummond will head a panel of experts. Call 347-0780.

Victoria Diaz is a book reviewer based in Liconia. Her column runs the first and third Thursdays of each month.



If you're thinking of buying a condominium, make sure it's not a mystery.

So says Sally Harlow, owner and mystery writer of Foul Play Productions. We asked her what she liked about living at The Heathers and we got an enthusiastic "Everything!" from Sally. Even though Sally is single she chose the large Stratford model in Cambridge Village. "I like space and luxury," she said, "and Cambridge Village had everything to pamper me after my days of planning murder and mayhem, make believe, of course."

The Robertson Brothers build a first class community and that enhances my image," she continued. "I have joined The Heathers Club and look forward to the golf season. I was pleased that they accept single women memberships."

Sally enjoys the overall setting of The Heathers, as well, and the location is perfect because her business is located in Bloomfield Hills.

Finally, we asked if she was 'at home' for life: "I'll never move," she responded. Sally evidently has solved the mystery of the perfect lifestyle.

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Historic house restored for office use

Continued from Page 1

"I brought Kelly through the house before I bought it," said Johnson, a Novi resident. "When he said 'OK,' I knew the job could be done."

Summerfield, owner of Creative Design and Construction and general contractor of the renovation, planned the building's exterior, paying close attention to the Victorian detail. Yet Summerfield and Johnson both agreed the interior should have a professional commercial environment.

"I believe in preserving the old, but if it's not salvageable, take it down," Summerfield said. "The out-

side of the building is historically correct. We used artistic license on the inside."

THE OFFICES in the two-story building, ranging from 120 to 200 square feet, are leased to financial planners and attorneys, including Johnson's brother-in-law and co-owner of the building.

Johnson and Summerfield each selected offices on the second floor. They will share a planning room spacious enough to store and lay out blueprints.

The exterior of the 2,562-square-foot building includes a Victorian-style, covered porch with turned

posts and spindles.

Summerfield modified the porch somewhat, replacing a flat, shed roof with steep gables and deep eaves commonly used in the mid-to-late 19th century.

"We wanted to define the entrance and make it interesting," he said.

Besides modifying the porch, Summerfield replaced the shed roof on the back of the building with a gable style roof and added a half moon window. The exterior includes beveled siding and cedar, gingerbread shingles. Some of the original siding on the building's east side was preserved.

The main floor, a departure from the 19th century exterior, includes a spacious reception area, four offices, a conference room, a lavatory and a small kitchen. The lofty eight-foot, seven-inch ceiling gives rooms a spacious look.

SUMMERFIELD BEGAN gutting the house in September, filling 10, 30-yard dumpsters with debris. Wet plaster was replaced with drywall and new, oak doors, window frames and molding were installed throughout the house.

Though the renovation is on schedule, and nearing its \$130,000 budget, Summerfield ran into some snags

along the way, mainly an eight-by-eight timber in the reception area.

To work around the structural beam, he redesigned the hallway and replaced angled doorways with conventional openings. Workers also installed headers above each window for wall and roof support and to bring the house up to code. Only the pine stringer, the side piece of the staircase where the steps abut, was saved.

The second floor includes the planning room and four offices, dramatically designed with vaulted and cathedral ceilings ranging from 12 to 18 feet. Timbers in the original ceiling were enclosed in drywall. Offices also include skylights and lofts for plants or extra storage.

Walls are decorated with subtle, background paper to complement the building's hunter green carpeting. The exterior is painted a classic gray, with burgundy and white trim. Plans also call for a brick parquette walkway reminiscent of the Victorian era.

Summerfield, who restored his own Victorian-style home in downtown Northville, admits that last fall "people would have called the building unsalvageable." Today, the owners call it a classic addition to the city's proud historic district.

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