

Marketing art

An alternative to galleries

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

MARKETING MAY not be a favorite activity of the artist, but it is an essential element in the process.

"Most artists do not have a rich benefactor to buy needed supplies to continue their work so that sales can be generated," said Farmington resident Alice Nichols. "When people come to an exhibit, whether it be club sponsored or at a gallery, they look at the paintings, but they also look at the price tag. Their reaction is usually not encouraging to the artist."

Nichols is an artist, a lecturer on a wide variety of art subjects, a teacher of art, and has been trying to cope with the business end of the profession for almost as long as she's been painting, which is as long as she can remember.

Most recently she has initiated periodic open houses in her home studio as an alternative to the high commissions charged by the galleries, as well as the myriad of hidden costs the artist must bear.

The next is scheduled 7-10 p.m. Sunday, June 18, at 33002 Maple. The address is between Elgin and Nine Mile Road west of Farmington Road.

"Artists love to do their creative activity on paper or canvas rather than building shipping crates, shuffling paintings to and from a show. Having people visit me in my studio allows them to see the whole creative process," Nichols said.

"I want people to come in and browse, and browsing does not mean commitment to buying. I like to talk to people about my work and, of course, I always have the coffee pot on."

A VERY COMMON question put to any artist is "How long did that picture take you to paint?"

Nichols says her standard answer is always, "Thirty years — or more."

"What allows any of us to present a demonstration and, or, complete a painting in a short time are the years of background and training. In my own case I enrolled in my first art class at age 13 so there's a lot of

years of experience in my paintings."

Many individual works of art take between 30-40 hours to complete. Prices also include factors such as entry fees to shows with no guarantee of acceptance.

To further complicate participation in a show, many shows are juried by slide presentation. This means the artist must include photography in his or her repertoire, or have the artwork professionally photographed.



If the work is selected by the juror and the show is not local, the artist must build a crate and ship the piece to the exhibit.

A factor of major significance in marketing art is the commission charged by the galleries.

"The present rate taken by galleries is upwards of 50 percent of the selling price," Nichols said. "It varies so markedly from show to show that artists have to be math experts to keep their records straight. This explains the great fluctuation (in prices) between local club exhibits and galleries."

NICHOLS HAS also been a part of two co-op galleries in her quest to market her work. The co-op is operated by the artists who share rent, staffing, and all the miscellaneous chores to keep the doors open. Both galleries closed because of changes in the lease.

"There are too many artists for the number of spaces available in the galleries, so many of us are looking for alternatives for exhibiting," Nichols said.

"Because I teach at Oakland Community College and do workshops and lectures I cannot keep regular hours of open time. I still enter local and national shows, but the home setting is nice for a show and it reduces the stress."

Browsers who cannot attend Nichols' open house are invited to call her for an individual appointment at 474-5137.

'Story Starters' winners announced

Jordan Sherburn, a second grader in Woodcreek Elementary School, won the first prize in a first and second grade division of the "Story Starters" contest, sponsored by the Farmington Community Libraries. He was followed by Kenbrook second grader Lyndey Howard.

In the competition between third and fourth graders, Chris Clayton, a third grader at Highmeadow took the first prize. Coming in second was

Scott Hankins, a fourth grader at Hillside.

Matt Penniman, a fifth grader at Beechview, took the first prize in competition between fifth and sixth graders.

All of the winners read their stories when Beverly Papai, director of the library, headed up the awards ceremony. The contest was sponsored in observance of National Library Week.



Artist Alice Nichols, at left, calls the painting she did from a scene in Opryland, Nashville, Tenn. "Alone." Nichols' first exhibition was one she organized for fellow-artists when she was a student at Farmington High School, and says

she's been coping with the marketing end of her profession ever since. Most recently she's found a reduced-stress way of marketing her watercolors by hosting open house in her home studio in Farmington.



Golden Egg

Lillian Langerman took the blue ribbon for her watercolor called "Golden Egg" in the spring art exhibit sponsored by Farmington

Artists Club. The painting won the first prize in competition with more than 200 original works of art in the show.

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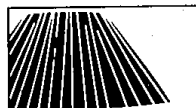
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