

# Creative Living

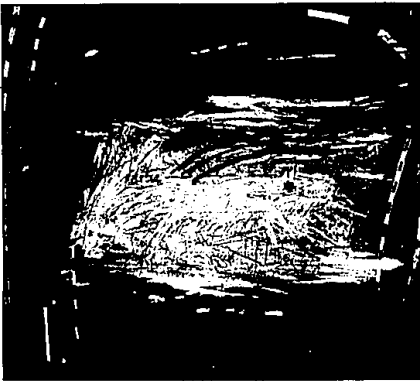
CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE



Corinne Abatt editor/644-1100

(S.F.10)

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"Yellow-Dog-Moon," oil on canvas by John Swannstrom, has been reproduced as a poster and is available at the Paint Creek Art Center and during the Art 'n Apples Festival in Rochester this weekend.

## Celebration is well deserved

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

No question about it, I owed Paint Creek Center for the Arts of Rochester a visit. A year or so ago I had written that it was hard to appreciate large paintings in the main second floor gallery. The place was like a dimly lit cavern.

Meantime, that area underwent a major renovation — fresh, light paint, track lights, carpeted walls and completely refinished floors and woodwork.

The "Celebrate Michigan Artists" exhibition on through Sept. 20 presented an excellent opportunity for a return visit. What a difference a renovation makes. This may be a historical building, but the second floor gallery enters the 90s with airy, grandeur and plenty of piazzas.

Juror Joseph DeLuca, artist and professor of art at Western Michigan University, chose 48 works for the show, which for the first time includes sculpture.

It's the biggest show of its kind so far and I would venture to say, one of the most exciting. How does this regional art center manage to attract such an adventurous, contemporary group of artists?

Well, for one thing this show annually draws entries from a goodly number of Cranbrook Academy of Art students, some of whom teach there, and the word gets around. Here is a place very much attuned to contemporary ideas and approaches. Whatever the reason, Paint Creek Center always had a gutsy, interesting, provocative "Celebrate Michigan Artists" show and this one is no exception.

FIRST PLACE winner, "Yellow-Dog-Moon," with references to American Indian culture, is a brilliant oil on canvas by John Swannstrom of Weldman, a little north and west of Mt. Pleasant.

Second place went to Carl Angevine of Warren for his acrylic on canvas, "Infinite Likenesses," a beautifully wrought painting with dramatic perspective and polished skill.

Donald Mendelson of Lathrup Village, took third place with "Primordial Village with Doves II," a mixed media painting. Mendelson has 120

several common shows of this powerful series in which he depicts faces of some of our very early ancestors, reminiscent of those found on totems and masks or carved on rocks.

Joyce A. Rocker of Grand Rapids most assiduously deserves the honorable mention for her compelling construction, "Murmurs of the Heart," and Carolyn Dulin's unglazed, colored porcelain kimono, also an honorable mention, has a quiet magical elegance about it.

A lovely bronze, "Eve," by Melvin G. Raber of Auburn Hills, with an apple on her shoulder, is marked not for sale, but Center officials report, it had several possible buyers.

The lovely, traditional "Eve" is on the same wall, but separated by several other works of art from "Queen of Hearts" and "Paris la Paris," a funky, smile-producing stoneware and barbed wire piece by Wendy Reese Bambas of Ypsilanti. Don't even think about putting them any closer together. But, they do give an idea of the breadth of the show.

THE IMPACT of Ann Hegarty's (Detroit) large charcoal on paper, "Night Fire," is immediate; that of "Silent," a four-piece work in iron, by Liang Hiao of Berkeley, is much more subtle, but equally unforgettable.

Certainly "Inside out; Allantus" by Ann Loveland of Orchard Lake is one of the best of hers I've seen and "Fresca and Fossili," a color zephyr by Laurie Hirsch-Tennant of Troy shows sensitivity and skill.

In the first floor gallery is a captivating one-artist show of painted wood assemblages by Gretchen Kramp who is completing a degree at Center for Creative Studies. Many are shaped like road signs and combine letters, writing symbols and bird and animal images. There's a lively, intellectual wit combined with some subtle statement-making in these pieces.

Each year the first-prize winner of the "Celebrate Michigan Artists" show is invited to return for a solo exhibit in the first floor galleries, a nice continuity that keeps the connections alive.

Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 407 Pine, Rochester.

## Graphic artistry Aitman shows new lithographs

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

Artist Harold Aitman doesn't know himself as well as he thought he did a decade or so ago.

Aitman, born in 1924, a leading American graphic artist, figured that the longer he worked at his art, the easier it would become. Not so. Sure, in the large exhibition of his lithographs at Park West Gallery of Southfield, his ability to capture the ethereal beauty of nature in the idealistic settings of city parks, public gardens and the countryside, is as skillful as ever. But, instead of going with the flow, he's swimming into the current.

"They are more complex," he said as he walked around the exhibit for the first time just before the opening. He stopped beside "Bridge," 1991, 18 by 24 inches, "one of the best pieces in the show," pointing out that he now creates more involved scenes, uses different angles, more elements and more complicated light sources. There are a lot of large format works (32 by 21 inches) in this show and more series than he had at his last one here in May 1987.

So, no, his career isn't easier, but he agrees, it is more challenging and he, "the passionate artist," can't resist a challenge.

In addition to the added complexities, which only make his lithographs more engaging, there appears to be more vitality, more warmth and stronger involvement between the artist and the human factor.

PEOPLE APPEAR more frequently in his works than ever before, not just strolling through the parks, but interacting — families having a picnic, children playing, lovers holding hands or walking arm in arm.

Aitman and his second wife, have a daughter, 8, and a son, 2, whom he calls "my second family." Not only does he have a delightful repertoire of second-family stories, his wife and the children occasionally show up in his art. But, the grand or overall view is always the prime objective and the viewer is invited to visually stroll in, around and through the idealistic scene, possibly passing his children at play, just as he would the joggers and the walkers.

And Aitman seems to be more in touch with reality. He is less detached from the world as evidenced by his inclusion of stop signs along the quiet snow-covered street of the village in rural Pennsylvania where he lives and works. "In Toby's House," he has included the telephone wires because they belong there. He has done several more scenes of the same community. "I did think anyone would be interested in my village and to my great surprise, people thought it was their



Harold Aitman's lithograph of a scene in New York City's Central park was done this year. It is just about 18 by 25 inches.

hometown. The Japanese have been buying them and the French have been buying them."

HE CAPTURES the lush, green beauty of rural Pennsylvania, complete with barns and horses masterfully. These and his other new works appear to have more detail than ever before — if that is possible. They have the pointillism quality of a fine painting, but they are, in fact, lithographs produced in Paris in editions of 285 including 35 artist's proofs.

"All of my prints use only six plates and I do all six of them." He said he often makes last minute changes on the plates, going back in to scrape away or add color for more dramatic effects — even when the plates are on the 100 year old press in Paris. He may crawl down into the press to make changes.

"You have to control so many things when you're doing this. I don't have any imitators because it's too hard to do. . . many French artists are unhappy to see me come. I take the best printer and work with him for three to four months."

And while each of these works would have been a wonderful painting, the reason he likes this medium is simple. "A painting disappears into a collector's house and is never seen by the public again; prints reach hundreds of people all over the world."

Well, at least Harold Aitman's prints do.

Park West Gallery, 29469 Northview, Southfield, is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, until 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.



"Picnic," which Harold Aitman did this year, shows the family as simply a part of the total scene, rather than as the singly most important element.

## UNICEF art benefit chairman recalls his Groves photo class

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

"Art for Children's Survival," a major fundraiser for the U.S. Committee for UNICEF, is happening because Paul LaBell, 1969 Groves High graduate, took a photography class.

Sound far-fetched? Well, not really. LaBell, a successful New York City-based print publisher for more than nine years, first developed his love and eye for art in that photography class. All the while and for years after, he was headed for a different career with a degree in marketing from Eastern Michigan University and another in hotel and restaurant management from Michigan State University.

He stayed at General Foods for four years. "Then," he said, "I made my avocation (art collecting) my vocation." No matter that friends and relatives wondered if he had gone off the deep end. With the change came a substantial increase in income, regular travel to Europe and the Far East and a career he truly enjoys.

"I'm so glad I grew up in the Midwest — in Birmingham — in a civilized world with good values. Now, living on the East Coast, I'm exposed to all kinds of culture. . . I love art. I'm a

LaBell proposed the project to the U.S. Committee for UNICEF last August. It is now organized on a major scale with hundreds of supporters, galleries, major museums and cultural institutions (including the Detroit Institute of Art), individuals and corporations.

very visual person."

As chairman of this UNICEF benefit, an art auction to be held at Sotheby's Thursday, Sept. 19, he's using his love of art to aid children throughout the world.

More than 120 American artists — including Anne Lebowitz, Claes Oldenburg, Frank Stella, Sam Francis, Roy Lichtenstein, Steve Sorman, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Ginny Ruffner — are represented in the collection of donated works in two and three dimensions. A catalog of the collection is being distrib-

uted to collectors throughout the country by leading galleries.

Donald Morris Gallery, 105 Townsend, Birmingham, is the local source for the catalog.

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"This," said LaBell, "is the first and only project of its kind." In 1980 his suggestion to have Graciela Rodó Boulanger be the artist for the International Year of the Child celebration was quickly accepted.

"It started because I just became interested in photography in my high school class at Groves. We went on a trip to the Detroit Free Press. I met Tony Spina. . ."

The rest is history. Spina is now a treasured friend. The interest in photography broadened to many other art forms and friends in the arts throughout the world. Now he's uniting the worldwide art community to help the next generation.

## 3 area painters get written up in American Artist

The fall edition of American Artist, on the newstands now, has articles on three area painters, Gwen Tomkow of Farmington Hills, Don Vogelheim of Farmington and Karen Carter of Birmingham.

In addition to an article about their work and how they do it, there are color pictures of paintings by all three.

Vogelheim is described as a "storytelling" artist whose still-lives range from groups of flowers and plants to her recent interest in marbles and the resultant award-winning "Big Shooter" series. In her recent backgrounds she has

used torn newspaper very effectively and several with this are shown in color with the article. Tomkow is described as "another watercolorist who has fallen in love with northern Michigan." There is a half page color photo of her painting, "Harvesttime" at the beginning of the article, another color picture of "Afternoon Dunes" and several of her drawings are reproduced.

Carter, who does both landscapes and lakescapes, delights in painting the beauties of her home state.