

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1992

CREATIVE LIVING

D

DOWN TO EARTH



MARTY FIGLEY

Books help gardeners pick variety of plants

The American Horticultural Society Flower Finder, Jacqueline Heriteau (Simon & Schuster, \$40), recommends thousands of flowers that are low maintenance, look great for a long time and are disease- and pest-resistant.

The 78 lists are segregated into the predictable categories of bulbs, perennials and annuals, but also include "workhouses of the garden" and plants for "theme gardens."

Included is information about how plants are categorized and general care of them. The color photos enhance. A thorough reference book, perfect for the '90s.

Proper pruning

"The Complete Guide to Pruning and Training Plants," David Joyce (Simon & Schuster, \$30), takes the mystery out of pruning all types of plants — trees, shrubs, roses, climbers, hedges, topiary, fruits and even greenhouse plants. About 300 step-by-step color diagrams illustrating the proper techniques accompany the descriptive text.

Whether one is planting a new specimen or wants to rejuvenate an old one, all the information is here. Time may be needed to study each step, but the results will be worth the effort for years to come. I highly recommend this for all gardeners who wish to learn correct pruning methods.

Old-fashioned look

"The Heirloom Garden: Selecting and Growing Over 300 Old-fashioned Ornamentals," Jo Ann Gardner (Garden Way, \$16.95 paper) features "Those plants introduced to American gardens from 1600 to 1950 . . . plus a few others defined as 'antiques.'"

A short history of garden styles from this period introduces the book. The main focus is the complete descriptions, including origin, how they were used and growing information. For those of you who enjoyed the new gardens at Meadowbrook Hall, this will enlighten. Sources for plants and seeds are included.

Tasteful publication

"The Moosewood Restaurant Kitchen Garden," David Hirsch (Simon & Schuster, \$15), is filled with tips about growing and cooking vegetables and herbs. The restaurant, begun in the '70s, quickly became a favorite place in Ithaca, N.Y., to sample delicious and nutritious food from many countries.

The layout of the book is very appealing. The first part whets the appetite by giving growing and cooking hints for a variety of vegetables and herbs. Designs are included for such gardens, with line drawings to illustrate. About a fourth of the book is devoted to recipes. Go get it!

Grass guide

"Grasses: An Identification Guide," Lauren Brown (Houghton Mifflin, \$10.95), first published in 1979, has just been released in paperback. It will make one appreciate these versatile plants and look at their variations in a new and different way.

Brown advises that identification is based on three characteristics — general shape, color and texture — rather than using technical terms, so the layman can learn to identify these plants. Excellent line drawings.

What comes naturally

"The Environmental Gardener," Brooklyn Botanic Garden (\$6.95), and other BBG handbooks are now being distributed by Sterling Press and are available at nurseries and bookstores.

This one shows how to create gardens while taking clues from nature. Environmentally safe gardening techniques, from planting to using the most pollution-free equipment, are stressed. The chapter for those interested in "natural" pesticides is a must-read.

It's not too late to buy "92 Weekend Garden Projects," Nancy Bubel (Rodale, \$22.95 hard, \$14.95 paper), since some of the ideas can be done in the fall and winter months: Discover Goldenrod, Root Some Cuttings, Roise Houseplants from Seed, for example. Then for spring and summer: Plot Your Weed Strategy, or, Try Container Gardening.

This is about gardening with a few crafts (thrown in). Chapters are short, but get right to the point.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave a message by dialing 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1859.

Artist finds isles

An exhibit of paintings at the Lemberg Gallery in Birmingham features landscape scenes within the city of Detroit that become personal islands for the viewer.

BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

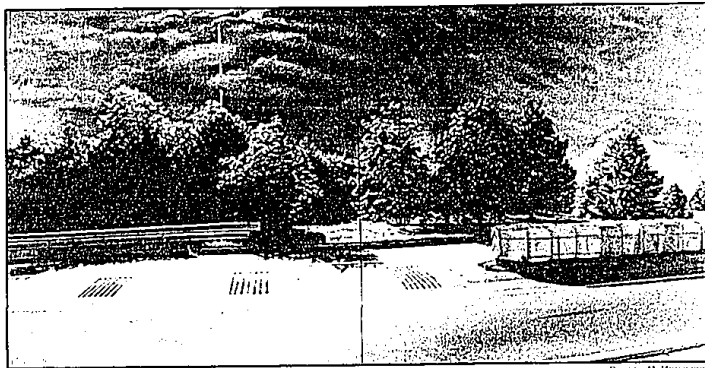


Michigan's motto is "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you."

Douglas Bulka's paintings encourage you to look about, as well.

Bulka takes an often overlooked site and presents it in a way that gives it a special ambience. The place is familiar in his art, yet something about the scene makes it seem to be from another world. It's as though the viewer has discovered an island in the city.

Bulka's paintings are featured in "Isolate," an exhibit continuing through Nov. 28 at the Lemberg Gallery, 538 N. Woodward in Birmingham.



ROBERT H. HENSELBERG

Private world: Douglas Bulka's paintings, exhibited at the Lemberg Gallery in Birmingham, are inspired by specific landscape sites within the city of Detroit. The artist illuminates them with light from above, giving them a special mood.

Bulka is inspired by specific landscape sites in the city of Detroit — along a freeway, for example — that are barely noticed even though they are large and even though many people pass them every day. Something about the specific space attracts the artist, a sense that once you're there you're somewhat removed from others.

"It's a combination of elements — the light (for example)," said Bulka, a Detroit native who earned his master of fine arts degree from Wayne State University, and who has taught drawing and painting at WSU and Lawrence Technological University.

"They're all night paintings based

on the freeway interchanges with . . . really bright lights.

"Once you enter into that space . . . your senses become heightened." Entering the site, you could encounter pheasants or other forms of life, something you wouldn't be aware of as you passed the spot because your attention would be on crossing the freeway.

"Whenever I enter into that space . . . I'm very aware that I've entered into this special world."

The light in Bulka's night scenes shines on the objects from above, softly highlighting them. The sky is often a gently swirling combination of color. Litter and graffiti are absent.

One scene features trees along a freeway interchange. Others feature familiar references, such as Tiger Stadium or sparkling lights in a city skyline.

The exhibit includes recorded sounds from the sites, such as traffic and crickets. The effect becomes soothing, like relaxation tapes.

Bulka will continue painting and lecturing on this series of work. The artist recently received a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Call 642-6623.

Quilts and dolls share journeys with viewer

BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

In many ways, Arlinka Blair's quilts and dolls represent journeys.

Her work combines motifs and patterns from different lands and cultures, so there's the sense of traveling. But the viewer could also take a journey inside himself or herself. The pieces honor myths and spirit legends, leading to the appreciation of simple pleasures.

The works are on display in an exhibit called "Textile Rhythms," continuing through Nov. 30 at Mesa Arts, 92800 Franklin Road in Franklin.

"My work and my dolls are all (connected) to the spirit world of Native Americans and Eskimos, Africa, Mexico," said the artist, who lives in Delaware.

"They're all happy spirits. Not voodoo.

"They're about healing and about journeys, the sort of things that people are discovering now. People are looking more into their lives, themselves."

Blair's quilts are colorful assemblages of textures and patterns, contained within a variety of borders.

Buttons and intricate work are among their features. Purple, red, green, blue, black, brown and gold are arranged with African, Asian and North American motifs, images and designs. They combine the ancient and primitive with the new and sophisticated.

Blair's dolls carry such names as "Raven Spirit" and "Old Woman's Spirit Who Walks With Wolves." They have personalities, some sad and wise and others whimsical. It's "fun to shop" for fabrics and objects for the quilts and dolls, the artist said. Cotton, silk, old African or

Indonesian textiles — the possibilities are limitless. Nature inspires the pieces, as do found items.

"I'm always out collecting. I love thrift stores. I find things on the sidewalk that I've used."

"Anywhere is fair game (for inspiration)."

"I love the search, looking for the next object that will inspire me. For me, going shopping is like going to a museum."

Blair got into quilting in a dramatic way. She used to print fabric, making such works as banners and wall hangings.

"Textiles was always my interest." Blair and her husband, who worked for a magazine, were living in Cyprus at the time of the Turkish invasion in 1974. A lot of the people in their town were captured and sent to a holding place, where Blair had a studio. The

women began stitching quilt designs for her.

"Once I started quilting I could never go back to just printing."

When she returned to the United States, Blair obtained a grant from the state of Delaware to do more extensive work. She found people in Appalachia to do the sewing.

The dolls came about when Blair wanted to do more three-dimensional work. Now they're like her friends, she said.

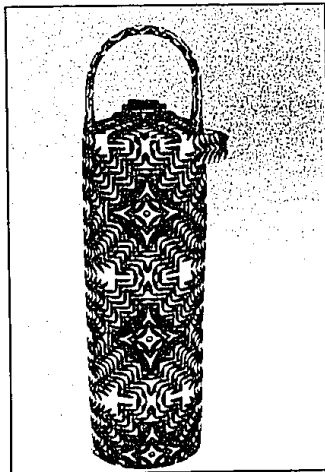
"It's nice to see them all together 'because I miss them."

"This is a beautiful place for them," Blair said, looking around the gallery. "For me it's important to put them in the right environment."

Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Call 851-9949.

Works in ceramic, metal suit exhibit to a 'tea'

Brewing creativity: This teapot by Michigan artist Kathryn Sharbaugh features an unusual pattern. Other tea-related art is on display at the Swidler Gallery in Royal Oak.



BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

Creativity is the theme of two exhibits now at the Swidler Gallery, 308 W. Fourth in Royal Oak.

"The Expressive Teapot: Focus on Function," continuing through Nov. 28, features more than 130 ceramic teapots by 50 artists from the United States, Canada and Wales, including John Glick of Farmington Hills.

"Steeping Matters: The Metal Tea Infuser," running through Dec. 31, presents the work of 30 artists from the United States, Russia and Canada, among them Patrick Irla and Gary Stefani of Birmingham and Adam Shirley of West Bloomfield.

The teapot was invented during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), when the Chinese turned from the process of pouring boiling water over powdered tea to the brewing of tea leaves. When Europeans took up the aromatic brew, they developed implements called infusers to remove bits of tea leaves and other matter floating in the beverage.

Glick's stoneware teapots bear multicolor patterns. Some have wooden handles. The works by other artists may take on a metallic look, or ornate designs and bright colors.

Some teapots are elaborate works

that almost fool the eye, as they resemble a heart or a skull, or have a "twig" for a spout and "fingers" for part of the handle. Kathryn Sharbaugh of Holly, Mich., made a cylindrical teapot with a pattern like an optical illusion. Another teapot, creamer and sugar set is arranged like a town, the containers looking like buildings.

Infusers are small in size (some less than one inch square) but great in challenge. Stefani's tea cube with tongs is made of sterling silver, copper and 18-karat gold. Irla fashioned a strawberry, complete with stem and ladybug, out of sterling silver and rose gold. Shirley's "Salute" is a sleek, abstract work of sterling silver and onyx.

Other infusers resemble a lobster trap, a figure with barbells, orange slices, a mace and an alligator (named "Al-E-Fuser").

This is the gallery's fourth annual teapot invitational. Also featured is a display of historical tea infusers from the collection of Helen and Peter Nowell.

Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday and by appointment. Call 642-4880.

Artbeat features various happenings in the suburban arts world. Send news leads to: Creative Living, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

For information and reviews of musical performances, please turn to the Entertainment section.

IMAGES OF '92

"Images of '92," a fine arts show and sale, will take place 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, at Orchard Mall, on the northeast corner of Maple

Art Beat

and Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield. Award-winning artists will exhibit and sell paintings, jewelry, sculpture, fiber, pottery and work in other media. Admission is free. A drawing for a door prize will be featured.

STATE OF THE ART

Photographer Joseph Messana, who has lec-

tured in the area (most recently Monday in West Bloomfield about Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture), will present a slide lecture showing noted public art in Michigan from 7:30-9 p.m. today at the Scarab Club, 217 Farmington, in Detroit. The presentation will include the People Mover stations and work by Marshall Fredericks, Carl Milles, Glen Michaels, Alexander Calder, Tony Smith, I. Noguchi, Michael Ayrton and others. Admission is \$5 for students and Scarab Club members, \$8 for the general public. Call 831-1250.