

Art works in area exhibits show private paths, public faces

BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

Tranquility is amid the rough tangle of woods and greens in the art works of Neil Welliver, displayed through June 3 at the Robert Kidd Gallery, 107 Townsend in Birmingham (call (810) 642-3909).

When the artist taught, he told his students "to be themselves. In his paintings, woodcuts and lithographs, Nature shows itself untouched to the viewer. Welliver's subjects are the landscapes he sees on his walks in the quiet surroundings.

"I walk in the woods a lot (until I) come across something that feels right," Welliver said when he was at the gallery for the opening of the exhibit.

Many of the works are large in size, further conveying the majesty of the scenes. Usually they are without wildlife. Welliver has said he paints "places of power, places where you can think."

These are settings full of strength and personality; they would be worth the trek to visit. The visions vary: A snowy panorama of mountains and trees, with light kissing the top of the mountain in a soft, glowing bluish. A tree stump is like a throne amid ferns that seem to ripple. Snow is touched with blues. A vibrant blue sky is reflected in a marsh.

Welliver paints out of a converted 18th or 19th century barn in Maine, far from crowds and traffic. He makes sketches at the scenes and finishes them at the studio.

"After my paintings are finished I have no interest in them at all. None."

Welliver, now 66, always wanted to be a painter. He had read every book in the local library by the time he was 14. He worked for a bachelor of fine arts degree in educational psychology "to get

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the most time to paint," and later served as an artist in the fine arts department at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale.

Making art

In her own words, Susan Kell of Rochester Hills uses a wide variety of media to "make art." The "making" is what's important rather than the subject matter.

Visitors to Kell's exhibit at the Cary Gallery can share in her enthusiasm for the creative process. The display, continuing to June 3 at 226 Walnut Blvd. in Rochester (call (810) 651-3656), features the artist's twig, altarpiece and tile-mosaic series. Both soft and bright colors come into effective play in the pieces.

Twigs, sometimes sliced lengthwise, are included in swirling cloth or cocoon-like forms that seem to contain a form about to appear. The altarpiece works have objects significant to the artist embedded in them, and feature a rectangular foundation at the bottom. The tile-mosaic pieces are made up of what resemble shards.

Not only rock and roll

"I always intermingle my art and music, letting one be conducive to the other," Ron Wood has said.

Wood is known as a rock musician, a member of the Rolling Stones, but he is also an artist. His visual art can be seen in an exhibit running through May 29 at the Circle Gallery in the Somerset Collection, 2801 W. Big Beaver Road at Coolidge in Troy (call (810) 649-1779).

The show is like a music hall of fame, with Wood's portraits of such icons as Dylan, Hendrix,

Morrison, Gaye, Holly and Presley, as well as Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith. The subjects are shown in the throes of performing as well as in more introspective moments. Charlie Watts examines his hands. Mick Jagger sits quietly and attentively, watching and listening at a session. Keith Richards is presented with deep gaze and skull ring. Some of the pieces are handwashed, giving them a charcoal look.

The Circle Gallery exhibit also is the premiere of Wood's Endangered Species graphics, based on designs he created for TUSK, a foundation that raises money to help save African wildlife.

Basketry invitation

The sixth annual basketry invitation at the Sybaris Gallery,

202 E. Third in Royal Oak, continues its tradition of presenting non-traditional baskets. The contemporary pieces offer eclectic expressions, some of which don't resemble baskets and couldn't carry anything but the spirit of the form. Twenty-five top artists from the United States and Japan are taking part in the display, which continues through May 27 (call (810) 544-3388).

John Sikau is now to the show this year. His tall, slender, plaited works are brightly colored. A group of them resembles a miniature forest. They are like giant party favors while displaying traditional basketry techniques.

Noriko Takamiya offers a puzzle with his pieces, such as the triangle that seems to shift the inside and outside. Kazuo Honma's

forms appear to be without beginning and end. Hideho Tanaka fashions wire and pulp into small shapes that resemble abandoned cocoons.

Sally Knight's "City Bowl" is lined with colorful buildings. Dona Look's white birch bark baskets are sleek structures. Ergastic pieces by Christine Joy resemble waving hair or wire that carries electrical currents. Judy Mulford incorporates such materials as photo transfers, beads and buttons.

Large pieces by Kathleen Bordo Combie are looped at the bottom; they seem to be dancing or are like upside down flowers. Sharon Robinson's stiffened tissue paper "Cigar Box" features waves like smoke. "Weeping Crane" by Norman Sheffield is a token figure.

Jan Buckman, Merrill Morrison, Jeannine Gorecki present tiny, bright shapes.

Sensitive touch

Rural landscapes and simple still lifes glow with beauty in oil and pastel paintings by Josephine Primeau, exhibited through June 3 at the Troy Art Gallery, 515 S. Lafayette in Royal Oak (call (810) 548-7919). In the renderings, skies and ground are full of soft shades; they are like an orchestra playing color instead of melody. The scenes are expansive but not intimidating. Fruits in the still lifes have deep, rich hues that add a sense of royalty.

Mary Klemic is editor of the Oakland County Creative Living section. You may call her at (810) 901-2569. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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Rose group to meet

The Metropolitan Rose Society will meet 7 p.m. Friday, June 2, at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center, 3500 Marala, east of Crooks and north of 13 Mile, behind Kimball High School.

The topic for the evening will be the society's upcoming rose show, which will take place June 17-18 at Macomb Mall in Roseville, with helpful tips on showing roses. The public may attend.

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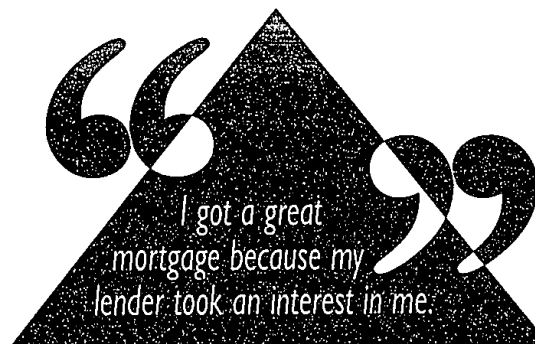
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