

Cave art draws painter to sifting sands

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Elaine Major sifts sand through a kitchen strainer as she prepares to lay a ground for cave paintings similar to those created by artists more than 17,000 years ago in Lascaux, France.

Major works with the tools at hand much as early man did when creating art on the cave walls. Upper Paleolithic artists used primitive tools and lumps of manganese and ochre to paint and engrave bulls, horses and deer on the limestone surfaces. Major makes use of 20th century everyday objects from her Livonia kitchen. To build a surface similar to rock, the 71-year-old artist uses a spatula to spread a coarse pumice gel over a canvas covered with gesso before sprinkling on the sand.

"The caves are closed now because fungus, carbon dioxide and other damaging elements brought in with tourists was destroying the art. That gave me this idea to paint these so people can enjoy them in their homes," said Major. "I add the sand to form a look that caves would have. I love texture. One of the things I like most about my

Cave Paintings

What: An ongoing exhibition of textured paintings by Elaine Major. The canvases are reminiscent of the ice age cave paintings and engravings found in Lascaux, France in 1940.

Where: Native West Gallery, 883 W. Ann Arbor Trail west of Main Street in Plymouth. Call (313) 455-8838.

paintings is touching them."

Major sketches animals onto the canvas with yellow ochre paint after leaning a canvas against a cupboard for a ready-made easel.

"I'm the only painter I know without a palette," said Major as she tears a sheet of aluminum foil from the roll then squeezes a trio of paints onto it.

Major uses a brush from the hardware store to brush wide strokes of color across the canvas. A plastic juice container cut in half holds water for her brushes, many of which are worn

to a point.

In the last year, Major's paintings have sold more than any other artist represented by Native West Gallery, according to co-owner Annette Horn.

"Her paintings continue to excite our customers because they're always fresh," said Horn. "Even though she's not Native American, the paintings bring all of the traditions together of the Lascaux cave paintings and the southwest Native American petroglyphs. It looks as if it's been chopped right out of a cave. Each painting is a story that you can make up as you view it."

Major, throughout her life, has always had a hand in art. She began painting seriously in 1991 and continues to study art with Lincoln Lau at Schoolcraft College.

"Over the years of raising five children, I had to do some kind of art so I created small paintings with iodine and Elmer's glue," Major said.

The retired sales representative continues to experiment with unorthodox processes including painting on wood and sandpaper, and assembling watercolor painted petals into three-dimensional floral art works. Yet another technique, Major refers to as pan art, is done outside in the backyard. Major layers rice paper and natural materials such as ferns from her garden or Saran Wrap in a large rectangular container. She then sprays colored inks over the concoction to produce abstract art works. The wrap and ferns resist the color leaving negative spaces after removal from the paper.

"I'm not interested in winning awards," said Major. "I just want to learn more about my craft and experimenting with different materials and techniques."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

Unconventional: Elaine Major prepares a canvas for painting images reminiscent of Lascaux cave art. Major works with the tools at hand much as artists did during the Ice Age.

Major has exhibited at Creative Framing and Gallery in Plymouth, the Festival of the Arts at Nativity Episcopal Church in Birmingham, and as a

member of Artifacts Art Club. She no longer belongs to Artifacts or any other club because of the time required to attend meetings. A heart attack three

years ago effected Major emotionally as well as physically. Today, she lives a healthier lifestyle and paints nearly every day.

Cave art: Major creates imagery similar to the bulls, horses and deer brought to life by Upper Paleolithic artists more than 17,000 years ago.



Collectors seek home for Ukraine folk art

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Miroslaw and Anna Hnatyuk are running out of time to find a permanent home for their extensive collection of Ukrainian folk art. The 80-year-old retired family physician and his 76-year-old wife spent more than 45 years collecting the carved and inlaid wood boxes, embroidery, pysanky (decorated Easter eggs), beaded necklaces, musical instruments, hand-painted dishes, costumes, ceramics, and dolls.

The Hnatyuks do not want to divide the art among their three children but hope to preserve the works for future generations by presenting the entire collection to a cultural institution. Originally, Dr. Hnatyuk's dream was to open a Livonia Museum of Ukrainian Art with the help of a benefactor, but none was found. Still, they hope.

Encouraged by Victor A. Kyryk, the Consul General of Ukraine, the Hnatyuks recently held a private opening reception for the museum collection comprised of carved and inlaid wood boxes from the Carpathian Mountains, ceramics from Hutsul and porcelain from Kiev. The Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine National Art Museum sent letters of congratulation from Ukraine. Kyryk attended as did Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey, former Livonia Mayor Robert Bennett and State Representative Lynn Bankes.

"We're not getting any younger," said Dr. Hnatyuk. "We hope there will be a time when this collection will find its proper place and will be the carrier of our rich culture for generations

that will come after us." Ukrainians are known the world over for the beautiful and intricate handiwork found in their embroidery, wood craft and Pysanky. In spite of centuries of oppression, Ukrainians continue to celebrate their culture by maintaining the traditional arts. The collection is a living history that tells about a strong and proud people who battled invaders ranging from the Tatars and Genghis Khan and his Mongol warriors in the late 13th century to Russian invaders to the Germans during World War II. Sheep wool vests and coats tell a story of harsh winters. Embroidered and beaded linen shirts were donated during the hot summers. Red and brown wool jackets from the

Carpathian mountains were worn only on Sundays. One-hundred-fifty or more embroidered costumes, some more than 100-years-old, differentiate the various peoples and villages. And the list of folk art goes on.

"Some of the things belonged to my grandparents," said Anna Hnatyuk. "Others were bought in Ukraine and Ukrainian communities in Toronto and San Francisco."

"Visitors call our home 'Little Ukraine,'" added a proud Dr. Hnatyuk attesting to the massiveness of the collection. Today, the collection continues to grow with each visit to Ukraine. The Hnatyuks, who first returned to Ukraine in 1984, have made annual trips to their homeland since the country

declared independence from the former Soviet Union six years ago.

BEN PIVNICK FAMILY FOUNDATION

The annual report of the PIVNICK FAMILY FOUNDATION for the year 1996 is now available for inspection for the next 180 days. Inspection must be made during regular office hours, and by appointment only. Contact: Mr. Pivnick at (248) 626-0870. Publish: August 17, 1997.

It's Coming...

DISCOVER

Farmington and Farmington Hills

An advertorial section!

Publication Date:

Thursday, September 11, 1997

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers look forward to presenting this new special section about the Farmington/Farmington Hills area businesses. There will be no 'ads' as we know them. Instead your 'ad' will be a story and photo about your business history, dreams and progress. This section will be published in Farmington, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield, Livonia, Northville and Novi—a total circulation of 60,430.

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Quarter Page.....	\$136 5" x 6 1/4"

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Deadline

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ROBERT and JOAN TURNER Manager

Publish: August 10 and 17, 1997

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Publish: August 17 and 24, 1997