



The wood carving of Christ made by Sister Mary Ignatius is an altar piece in the chapel of Mercy High School.



Art student Judy Ferro works overtime on a pencil drawing.



Catol Summers looks at sculpture done by former art students. Although they look like bronze, they are a special process developed in the department.



This sample of a pencil human-emotions drawing is being done by fourth-year student Pansey Fellrath. The crying child is being comforted by a great grandmother.

Sister Mary Ignatius Art, students fill her world

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It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find an art department chairman who enjoys her work more than Sister Mary Ignatius of Mercy High in Farmington Hills.

"I love every minute of it," she says, while talking with several students who have stayed past class time to work on projects.

She apologizes for what she terms the "clutter" in the art room which is, in fact, highly stimulating because of the variety of media on display.

Mercy is one of the few schools where all of the art in the school is either work of present or former students or the very talented department chairman herself.

IN SPITE OF 27 years with the school, from the time it was on the Mercy College campus on Outer Drive until now, and the large number of classes and students (presently around 300) in the four-year art curriculum, Sister Ignatius is a working artist.

She has done the wood carvings on the chapel altar, the 14 by four foot mosaic in the center of the altar panel and many more mosaics throughout the school.

Saying with her familiar smile that she loves working in every area of art—woodcarving, painting, calligraphy, mosaic and enamel and copper—"because of the short periods of time I have available, mosaics and calligraphy are easiest to pick up."

"My mosaics are not traditional in that they are not grouted in plaster. I do not use grout. I apply the mosaic directly on masonite or plywood so they are movable."

"It is very time consuming. Americans, I'm afraid, are addicted to the hurry up, hurry up, let's get things done philosophy."

Mosaics may be time consuming, but she still has managed to complete 21 large, brilliant ones for the school in styles that go from bordering on primitive art in the design to realistic and impressionistic. Much of the fine calligraphy on the hall walls and in the case displays is also Sister Ignatius' work.

Her wood carvings are all done from Honduras mahogany which she says is "hard enough to give nice firm lines and soft enough to work with ease."

She found that particular wood (through a student whose father worked for one of the automotive companies

"It is used in car doors because it has the least shrinkage of any wood, less than one one-hundredth of one percent. Her donor has the pieces laminated together into large blocks for carving and another interesting characteristic of the wood came to light from this. The outer wood of the tree is darker than the inner. Honduras Mahogany grows in a swampy area and the moisture colors the outer part of the trunk."

Consequently the carvings are not uniform in color although in most cases the grain is. One exception to this is gentle figure of Christ which, she says, from certain angles is smiling. In the laminating process one of the strips of the block was put in cross grain, presenting a challenge to the skilled carver who says her tools went dull many times before she completed the figure.

Students at Mercy have won many national awards for their art work. Sister Ignatius mentions many whose careers are promising.

She encourages each graduating art senior to leave at least one piece of work at the school, so as she walks the halls she can remember both the individual and her work.

Sister Kevin who teaches copper enamel is equally proud of the work of many of her talented students.

BOTH ARE CONSTANTLY interested in developing new techniques and new challenges for their students.

One of the most effective for fourth year students has been pencil drawings titled human emotions. Another has been sculpture that looks at first glimpse like bronze, but which is a process Sister Ignatius discovered.

The figures are made of wire then covered with Modoclaym, a plastic base clay that dries pure white without firing. After a base coating, it is covered with a paste of turpentine and beeswax into which bronze or silver powder is added. The powder mixes and stabilizes giving a metallic finish.

No Sister Ignatius says, she would never have time to put together a one woman-show of her work. In one sense she has a point. For she has her own show daily for all who pass through the chapel or halls of Mercy High School. And with her work is that of so many young artists for whom she has provided direction and inspiration.

From that point of view, there is a constant one-woman show on at the high school on the northeast corner of Eleven Mile and Middle Belt.



A composite which will be four heads of the same man is a study in human emotions, a fourth-year assignment.