

Elegant Art Forms

2 combine talents to create specialty art

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Specialty art is the phrase used by Marlyss Hollyer and Terry McKissack to describe their combined talents that make up the year-old operations of "Elegant Art Forms."

Their finished art works runs a middle road between commercial art and fine art crossing all lines from cartooning to portraits, sometimes combining them all.

In the throes now of finishing paintings for a new room in Detroit's Diamond Jim Brady restaurant, their commissions have run from painting a wall closet in a private home so it appears as a barn door, to the Ambassador Bridge as it appeared during the turn of the century.

"The whole business has turned us into a couple of history buffs," McKissack said. "We do almost as much reading as painting while we're researching out some of our clients' requests."

Researching for a Miss Piggy who greets youngsters on the entryway walls of a Farmington pediatric clinic or copying a picture of a clown in greasepaint was a simple matter. Finding references to make a picture of Jefferson Avenue as it looked in its long-ago heyday or finding a photograph of Jessie Bonstelle in her youth was another matter.

to do something for a second time. And when that happens we'll be ready," Ms. Hollyer said, speaking of the couple's growing library.

The partners have become avid shoppers at used book sales and stores because so many of their clients have requested themes of a specific era.

"We paid \$80 for one book because we were in a pinch and had to, and we've used it once," McKissack said. But scouting the book sales yielded their best find for 50 cents.

"I think it was a lettering book that was used for work on old posters," Ms. Hollyer said. "It's our very favorite and we've referred to that dozens of times."

On occasion "tons of sketches are made," Ms. Hollyer said, when a client wants art of a given era but is not sure of what subject.

"The most work we ever did for one client was one who asked for paintings of some gorgeous women to hang in his bar. Everybody's idea of a gorgeous woman is different I guess. He wanted very robust ones but forgot to tell us that."

Staff photos
by
Randy Borst

"In the end he was very happy with our composites of Sophie Tucker and Sarah Bernhardt."

McKISSACK handles most of the buildings and scenery requests for Elegant Art Forms and Ms. Hollyer does most of the figures and faces, though it is not uncommon that the two work on the same picture at the same time.

They worked on their first job together painting murals in Farmington Nursing Home, a job that was tailor-made for McKissack at the time. As things turned out, it was a turning point in his career.

A fine art oil painter and owner of a construction company, McKissack was recuperating from surgery when he was offered a commission with Ms. Hollyer to brighten up the walls of the nursing home.

"I could still use my hands and my head but that was about all," McKissack said after his recuperation period. "We found out that we worked well together and stayed on to cover every wall they've got over there."

Meanwhile, Ms. Hollyer was finishing up studies at Oakland Community College "and just starting to think very seriously about becoming a fulltime artist," she said.

Now they both work full time, "bouncing ideas off one another which is the fun part," Ms. Hollyer said. Inquiries will be taken by calling Elegant Art Forms, 563-4454.



The portraits of seven persons who were prominent in building Detroit were combined into one picture, designed and painted by Marlyss Hollyer. The art

form is called specialty art, which is the specialty of Elegant Art Forms.



Requests from clients for either landscape or buildings is generally taken care of by McKissack. He's working on a painting here depicting what Jefferson Avenue would look like after its restoration.



Terry McKissack and Marlyss Hollyer show two paintings from Elegant Art Forms that will be hanging in Diamond Jim Brady's restaurant by the time this is read. Entry to the Ambassador Bridge, at the time it was built, was from a park, as shown on the left. The painting of Detroit Opera House is done in bold pink and red.

Fortune smiles on area composer

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The golden hand on Martin Scot Kosins' shoulder hasn't let go yet. It was there when he first thought of recording some of his compositions.

The first release by Kosins' company, Open Sky Records, "Songs of the Seeker," will be out in mid-August. The album name is one of three compositions on the recording. The other two are "Winter Moods for Flute," featuring Bud Shank, flute, and "Love Letters" with Shank, Patricia Terry, harp, and Barbara Badgley, cello. Musicians featured on the "Seeker" are Ani Kavafian, violin, Robert Williams, bassoon, and Thomas D. Barnes, piano.

Kosins also landed long-time character actor John Carradine to do the narration for "Songs of the Seeker," which amounts to the first chapter of his golden ledger.

The story of their first meeting is nicely written on the inside cover of the album. Very simply, he wrote the narration with Carradine in mind, ran into him in a restaurant one day, introduced himself and the actor agreed to look at the material.

Kosins, who uses his own intuition and a good astrologer, may not think of the "Seeker" as a courageous undertaking, but it is because it's atypical of what's selling in the record stores. Yet not for a second would I predict that sales of this album will follow tradition. Chances are good that it will do extremely well. That's if you have a crap-shooter mentality and believe in betting with the guy on a streak.

Right now, Marty Kosins is a winner and he's managing in spite of rather surprising odds. How many handicappers in the music industry would have given good odds on his achieving immediate success as a classical composer when he was also trying to sell very credible pop compositions. Young clas-

sical composers don't just pop up and start commanding attention that fast. This one did and he has yet to get his first pop composition on record (soon maybe). In the meantime, Kosins says his first recordings on other than his own label really paved the way for the formation of Open Sky Records.

While all these things are happening around the country, his home area isn't ignoring him. Last year, Kosins did the music for a special children's concert at Meadow Brook Music Festival. This year, he's already completed a concerto for flute with piano and orchestra to be premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Neville Marriner at Meadow Brook Aug. 23.

"Meadow Brook is very special for me because I've been wanting to do it

for years and years. Neville Marriner is one of the most respected conductors in the world."

Kosins will play the piano part and Clement Barone, the flute.

The new composition was rehearsed when Marriner was in town to conduct earlier this summer.

"Marriner couldn't have been nicer," said Kosins. "He couldn't have been more complimentary. Evidentially, I had given them what they wanted. It's melodic and easily accessible for a pop concert. I wrote a piece tailored for this concert — something that will be an audience pleaser — which is the kind of commission I enjoy doing. I'm grateful to Meadow Brook (festival director) because he had enough confidence in me to give me the commission."

Kosins called the concerto "Rendezvous," in four movements, "very sentimental, very melodic and very romantic."

He is known as a romantic and readily accepts the description. And because his mother died while he was working on it, Kosins said, "It may be all the more emotional."

Kosins seems a little mystified to discover himself writing so much music for flute. "Everything I'm doing is for flute. I can hardly even hold it (a flute), but they all think I'm a flutist. I've become a flute composer."

Bud Shank commissioned him to do a composition for flute and guitar and he has a major commission from the New American Orchestra of Los Angeles to do a concerto for two flutes to be performed next year.

Three more Open Sky albums are in the works — the Ink Spots doing new and old songs, a jazz series featuring Al Hilder and Hank Jones and an historic series of out-of-print jazz of the '40s.

"What I'm trying to do is issue records with lasting significance. There's so many coming out with a life of about six months."

And while a couple of his pop compositions may show up on these and future records, Kosins said, "I didn't form the company to do all mine — that's how it started, but that's not the purpose."

For one thing, this Detroit, now in his mid-30s, has yet to find a side of the music and recording business he doesn't like. All of it, from composition right down to the mechanics of actually cutting a record and promotion, excites him.

Having Carradine agree to do the narration for "Songs of the Seeker" was a big moment. The sound of the opening chords of his concerto in Baldwin Pavilion on Aug. 23 will be another.



Martin Scot Kosins (left) and Bud Shank, flutist, talk business California-style.

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