

Art exhibition marks American debut for Poland's answer to Michelangelo

By M.B. Dillon Ward

Stefan Derbich, Poland's answer to Michelangelo, makes his American debut Friday at The Galerie at St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake.

Derbich's daughter, Emilia Palmer of Farmington Hills, began months ago organizing her private collection for the art exposition which runs through April 30.

One display will be more than 70 pieces of the 74-year-old artist's work.

His lifetime of art ranges from brightly-colored abstract oils to 300-foot murals that adorn ceilings and walls of cathedrals throughout Poland.

A brush and pallet alone, however,

cannot accommodate Derbich's talent. He designs church interiors from the chandeliers to the pews, adds sculptures, alters, builds stained glass windows and religious mosaics.

The Zlotniki Kujawskie Poland native hand cuts each tile used in the life-sized mosaics which commonly depict the Last Supper and the Stations of the Cross. Lining the walls of churches, the tiles give the effect of sparkling diamonds, Palmer said.

PALMER AND her husband David were encouraged by their friend and acquaintances to exhibit their collection, shipped from Poland by Emilia's family in crates weighing 500 pounds.

"Everyone remarks that his style is so different from what they see in this

country, and we have so many paintings that we decided, why not let people see them?"

"We realize their great value and that sooner or later they will be recognized here," said Palmer, who first left her Poznan, Poland home and a job as a university professor in 1977 to work as a metallurgical engineer for Massey Ferguson, Inc. in Livonia.

Although the exposition is Derbich's first outside Europe, his work has appeared in international exhibitions and in Warsaw's museums since his graduation in 1931 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Poland.

Art has been his life work with the exception of the five years during World War II and the German occupa-

tion of Poland, when Derbich was imprisoned in a German work camp.

He started out with his own factory of furniture and toys. He made beautiful tables and desks with inlaid wood. Later, he began spending all spring and summer painting in churches and cathedrals, coming home on the weekends," Palmer said.

"He'd paint the ceilings standing up on scaffolding that was five stories high.

"In the winter, he'd paint at home, so much so that paintings were everywhere, which he'd end up trapped in the center of the room. But that's the way he relaxed."

Some of those paintings Derbich parted with for up to \$1,000, Palmer



Polish artist Stefan Derbich often chooses faces and hands as subjects for his oil paintings because they express so much.

we did she almost collapsed."

The Derbich children escaped punishment because "it would only discourage their love to paint."

"My dad said he liked the train, 'it looked good.' So it stayed on the wall

for a couple of years," she added.

Derbich's encouragement didn't accomplish much, however.

"I paint occasionally, usually on vacations, but my brother quit after the train," Palmer said.



At ease perched upon scaffolding towering five stories, Derbich takes a break while painting a mural on the ceiling of a Polish church early in his career.

INSIDE ANGLES

BATTER UP will be resounding throughout the area soon as softball leagues take to the fields. To help you get in form, the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department is hosting its annual spring training tournament for men the weekend of April 30. An entry fee of \$90 and team roster is due upon registration at the recreation office, 31555 11 Mile. Registration deadline is April 28. The tournament will be open to 16 teams on a first-come, first-served basis. Games will be played at the Knights of Columbus and Drake Park fields. For further information, call 474-6115.

A FREE HOME care course is now available for anyone interested in helping persons with multiple sclerosis. The course is being conducted at Botsford General Hospital from 7:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. on either Mondays and Wednesdays for eight consecutive weeks. A different professional will speak at each session of the series, which the Metro-Detroit Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society conducts twice yearly. For additional information, call the department of health promotion and development at 471-8091.

THE FAVORITE PET contest sponsored by the Farmington Jaycettes turned out to be a real hit. Not only did Farmington come up with three favorite pets, the Jaycettes raised \$240 to donate to the Oakland Humane Society. The top winner in the competition was Captain Toot, owned by Sue Campbell of Peppermill Street. Second place went to Sunny Mangrum, owned by Mary Ann Mangrum of Harlan Street. Third-place winner was Bam Bam Winston, owned by Dale and Sandy Winston.

MATH AFICIONADOS, listen up. The 13th annual Lawrence Institute of Technology math competition for high school students will be April 25, 1-3 p.m. There is no registration fee for the competition, which is open to all high school students. Prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers, with top prize taking \$100, second \$50, and third \$25. No calculators or slide rules will be allowed, and the college will provide pencils and blue books. The competition will be in the science building auditorium on the LIT campus, 21000 10th Street. Deadline for registration is April 20. Interested students should see their high school mathematics department head or call the LIT school of arts and sciences at 356-0200.

CONGRATULATIONS TO Josephine Helzerman of Lorikay Drive, Farmington Hills, who recently was honored for her outstanding record. She is employed by Alvin's Women's Apparel.

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