

'Arts and Flowers' starts off well

By Marge Alpern
special writer

Few of us can bring great art into our homes, but all of us can see and enjoy it in our museums.

Last week many people who perhaps rarely visit the Detroit Institute of Arts found a special reason to go there. Gardeners throughout Michigan came to see and experience "Arts and Flowers — A Festival of Spring."

This was the first time that the volunteers of the Detroit Institute of Arts and 70 community organizations jointly sponsored a week of exhibits and activities. It was a great success.

The puzzling questions about art which many visitors have — Is it good or bad and what does it mean — were replaced by the delight and pleasure of seeing flowers take their rightful place next to the man made masterpieces in the world of art.

Among the most enjoyable of all the lectures, activities and exhibits were the floral masterpieces designed by members of the Federated Garden Clubs to complement the museum's masterworks.

Art raises images in our minds. The images inspired by a master work, interpreted by an accomplished flower arranger could in themselves be appreciated as works of art. They also help the viewer see a deeper beauty or significance in the masterpiece.

"Senolt Bath," an impressionistic painting by Renolt, automatically would suggest a romantic, light floral arrangement.

Rose Albers of Holland Garden Clubs, as arranger, therefore chose the round forms of tulips and other flowers in soft pink, mauve, lavender and flesh tones to convey a feeling of feminine beauty.

The surrealist painting, "Shadow Country," by Yves Tanguy, creates the impression of mystical space with strange, floating amorphous forms.

The flower arranger who selected this painting to interpret, Chris Roehman of the Ann Arbor Garden Club, used the subtle colors of a desert scene with exotic flowers almost alien to our eyes. She successfully conveyed the same abstract, otherworldly feeling of the masterpiece.

"Zip," a large, powerful painting by Barnett Newman, is a solid, red canvas with a single white line down the middle.

The floral artist who interpreted this painting, Joan Micou of the Junior League Gardeners, repeated the minimal design of "Zip" with great skill. She captured its mood of simplicity and intensity.

To all those who love beauty, art and flowers are an obvious combination. However, there are atmospheric problems involved in maintaining them in the same space for any length of time.

Paintings need low humidity to prevent deterioration and cut flowers need a high humidity to maintain cell turgidity to remain crisp and fresh.

In the low humidity of the museum, the perfect petals became somewhat soft and limp by the end of the exhibit. I am sure the planners of this large-scale flower show were very concerned about the life expectancy of many of the floral arrangements.

A MICHIGAN woodland scene won enthusiastic response from many who paused, studied and admired its natural beauty. The scene was designed by horticulturalist, Ralph Mize of Cranbrook Institute of Science and executed by Cranbrook House and Gardens Auxiliary under the direction of Phyllis McLean and Patty Shen.

The garden surrounding the pool area in the

Rivera Court of the museum looked as though it had just sprung up there naturally.

One of the great pleasures of a walk in the woods is the infinite variety of plant forms to be seen. So, here in the museum were gathered a variety of ferns, the essence of woodiness, ground covers and wild flowers.

Plants were thoughtfully selected, gracefully arranged and visibly labeled. Spill rails laid in a zig-zag form enclosed and defined the garden.

Several visitors expressed dismay that the garden was soon to be disassembled and hoped it was part of the permanent display. This was indeed a tribute to the Cranbrook gardeners and our Michigan woodlands.

There were many aspects of the festival that were top quality. As a gardener, I must say, however, that everything was overshadowed by the magnificence of our great museum itself. It deserves our strongest support.

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