

"Sunflowers" by Georges Braque is oil on canvas, 50 inches square and the only one in the exhibition by the French painter. Braque died in 1933 at 80.

Masterworks shown at Meadow Brook

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

Artistically and spiritually, few settings can rival Meadow Brook Hall for the exhibition of 36 masterworks from the Reader's Digest collection.

And an equally few collections rival the quality of this one, even though the works represent a small portion of the total acquired by Lila Acheson Wallace, who with her husband DeWitt Wallace, founded Reader's Digest in 1922. They continued as sole owners until he died in 1981.

"Selections from the Reader's Digest Collection" will be open to the public at Meadow Brook Hall of Rochester Oct. 18-22. In some of the eight cities on the international tour, it is open by invitation only.

Included in the collection are oil paintings by Bonard, Braque, Cezanne, Chagall, Gauguin, Manet, Modigliani, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Seurat, Sisley, Soutine, Utrillo, Van Gogh, Vermeer and Vuillard; sculptures by Brancusi, Giacometti, LaChaise and Picasso; pastels by Degas, Morisot and Vuillard; watercolors by Dufy; and a crayon drawing by Matisse.

MRS. WALLACE, born in Canada, daughter of a Presbyterian minister devoted her life and wealth to the sharing beauty. She began collection

in the early 1940s, buying not for investment, but because she loved the work.

In all, there are more than 3,000 works in the Reader's Digest collection, considered to be one of the finest corporate collections of Impressionist art in America.

There are parallels in the lives of the two women who made the showing of the collection at Meadow Brook Hall possible, Matilda Dodge Wilson, who with her second husband, Alfred Wilson, built Meadow Brook Hall, and Mrs. Wallace who collected the art.

Both were born in Canada of middle class families. Mrs. Wilson's father, George Rausch, brought his family to Detroit and operated a saloon. Mrs. Wallace, born in Canada, was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. Both were avid gardeners and excellent businesswomen.

Both married sons of Presbyterian ministers and both were deeply involved in collecting fine art and supporting many areas of the arts. The Wilsons built Symphony Hall and Music Hall, gave the land and funds for Oakland University, and provided for the preservation of Meadow Brook Hall.

AMONG THE MANY Wallace philanthropies were the restoration of Monet's home at Giverny, outside of

Paris, the Egyptian galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the preservation of Boscobel, considered to be one of the most beautiful 19th century mansions in the country, the Metropolitan Opera, the Museum of Modern Art, the Martha Graham Dance Company and the Egyptian temples at Abu Simbel.

One of her quotes which served as a guideline for her art collection was, "A painting is like a man, if you can live without it, there isn't much point in having it."

It is said she had memorized her will and liked to quote it, "I, Lila Acheson Wallace, being of sound mind and body . . . spent it."

The first Holiday Gift Shoppe at Meadow Brook Hall is open now through Sunday, Oct. 20. Featured will be thousands of handmade items from crafters and folk artists from all around the country — a full range of gifts for weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, housewarmings and the holidays.

The gift shop, in the Carriage House, is open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

Admission to Meadow Brook Hall includes the exhibition. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

California look

Builder comes home

By Corinne Abelt
staff writer

To many builder/developers, 40 acres equals 60 or more houses — to Robert Blake, president of Holly Development Company, 40 equals seven.

Blake, who grew up in West Bloomfield and went to California to make his fortune, plans to have seven homes on the 40 acres on the northeast corner of Maple and Middlebelt, Bloomfield Ridge.

The 38-year-old entrepreneur decided on this kind of a project for several reasons. He has owned the land for some time. The Michigan economic climate is improving and he wants to make a statement in his home area.

THE lots are between five and seven acres each. The house, under construction now and being built on spec, is a 6,200 square foot California contemporary. The entire first floor will be travertine marble.

"I've tried to bring a little of California to Michigan," said Blake. "I considered putting condos on it, but the property was deed restricted. I could win in a court battle, but I didn't want to. I was raised in West Bloomfield. My parents still live here. This

is our first project here . . . It's very important to me that this comes out really well.

"If these were built in California, they would be a million and a half, not including the land."

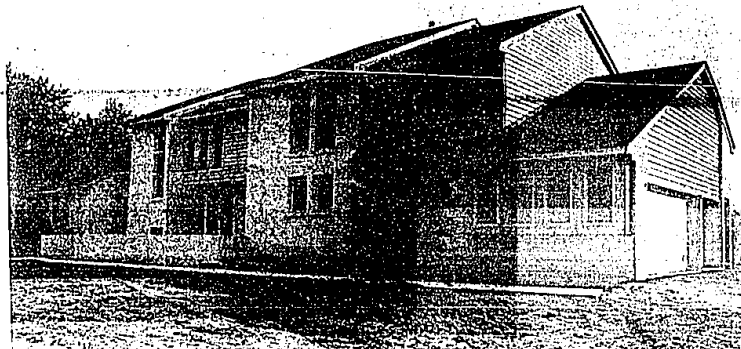
Then to explain a statement about not expecting to make a profit on the project with the lots he said, "With the reputation I'll make from doing it, I'll make a greater profit in the long run."

Blake said each house will have its own private drive. The 40 acres backs up to 30 acres of wetlands — flood plain that can't be built on, so the views of woods and meadows will always be safe.

The lot on which the house under construction is situated is 320 by 1,400 feet meaning there will be neighbors about 80 feet away.

BLAKE SAID, "Trees shield each house, but we want people to feel they have neighbors."

David Lubin is the architect. The house is open for visitors 2-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. For information, call the real estate agent, Esther Shapiro, 644-4760.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Builder/developer Robert Blake decided to make his statement about his work with California style contemporary house. Blake said no one knows how to build a

brick colonial like a Michigan builder, so he decided to show the style he does best.

To his fans, Gregory Perillo's a superstar

By Maureen Aitken
special writer

STANDING IN FRONT of a line of fans, artist Gregory Perillo is signing his works, kissing women, and telling stories of

his life as a recognized artist of the American West.

Perillo, or "The Chief," was at The Plate Lady in Livonia on Sunday for his only Michigan appearance this year.

The Italian artist, who is often mistaken for an Indian, is best known for

his work on American Indians. His collectibles include plates, lithographs, figurines and bronze sculptures.

The son of an Italian immigrant, his work has received national recognition, including praise from Nancy Reagan and one-man shows in the Wally Findley Galleries and the G. Harvey Gallery. He also has a 15,000-member fan club.

PERILLO FIRST became interested in art at the age of 4. In the midst of the Depression, his family was so poor that he rarely had white paper and he had to use espresso for paint.

"My father was my first idol . . . he was an immigrant from Italy and, when he came to America, he would go to night school to learn about this country."

"Before he went to bed, he used to tell us stories about American history," he said.

Perillo became intrigued by the stories and began to draw Indians on paper bags that his mother would iron for him. Perillo's interest in Indians grew and, as he started to do his own historical research, his artistic work improved.

"WHEN YOU love something, you want to know about it and you are learning without even knowing it," he said.

Perillo has spent a great deal of time learning. A high school drop-out in Staten Island, N.Y., Perillo leaped that he had to go back to high school, if he wanted to study art.

Perillo finished high school and went to study at Pratt Institute, the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League.

In 1950, Perillo met western artist Robert William Leigh, who had a profound effect on Perillo's technique.

"I was his only student for two years," he said. "He was my Moham-mad Ali. He was my idol supreme."

HE ALSO worked for an ecclesiastical artist, painting murals of the crucifixion and the Last Supper. The elaborate costumes and symbols of tradition are similar to those of the American Indian, he said.

"It's almost the same subject," he said — "the earthy type."

Perillo got his first break in New York, where he got in an argument with a man who pointed his boat. The argument ended quickly and after seeing Perillo's work in a gallery, he was impressed.

"He said, 'Now would you like to belong to the Hudson Valley Association,' which is one of the ultimate in America!"

THE HUDSON Valley Association is a prominent group of artists, including contemporaries such as Norman Rockwell.

From there, Perillo's career blossomed to its present success, with his work in 11 galleries in the nation.

According to Perillo, his highest honor came in Germany in 1984, when he represented America in honoring the Germans on the Mayflower.

While Perillo's paintings were successful, Perillo has branched out into different mediums, including wood carving and sculpture.

"I just finished a 650-pound bronze sculpture for the front of my house," he said. "It's an Indian horse raised in a cry of vengeance against the white man. I'm not hostile, I'm on the Indian's side."

PERILLO'S COLLECTIBLES range from \$40 to \$100 for plates and approximately \$25 for lithographs. Most of his better-known works are of Indians, horses and wildlife.

Perillo's favorite work is "The Peaceable Kingdom," a plate with an Indian boy, a lion, a tiger and other animals living in an unthreatening environment.

"Chief Crazy Horse," a Chieftain series plate, has Perillo's face in place of the Indian face.

"In the series of Great Chiefs, I used a great likeness (from photos)," he said. "But I would give the faces the spirit of commander and chief."

Since there was no photo of Crazy Horse, Perillo thought his face would do.

ONE OF the most celebrated works is "Chief Sitting Bull." The plate shows the pride and courage of the American Indian, through the powerful facial image and beadwork.

Although Perillo's pictures depict Indians in peaceful surroundings, Perillo knows that this is not the case today. He finds the situation of the contemporary Indian sad.

Despite the recognition, openings and social gatherings that accompany a recognized artist, Perillo believes art means dedication. "If you've got dedication," he said, "that means you are in love, because you are obsessed."

Although Perillo has philosophical artistic beliefs, he is not a stereotypical artist. One of his favorite hobbies is dancing and his favorite singers are Tina Turner and Madonna.

"DANCE like Michael Jackson and John Travolta," he said. Perillo said that sometimes his whole family, including his daughter, son and wife, dance together. He usually dances at 4 p.m., after working from 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and running at 11 a.m.

Perillo's unique art has progressed into a book, as well as painting a picture titled "The Cowboy and the Lady," which is of the President and Nancy Reagan.

He will also be a part of the PBS series "The West of the Imagination," which will feature the American West themes.

According to Juanita Luther, who has been collecting Perillo's work for three years, all of the attention for his work is deserved.

"He introduced a lot of depth and beauty through everything that he does," she said. "He has given me a different perspective."

But for Perillo, recognition is not a sign that the work is complete. "I want to grow artistically," he said.



Gregory Perillo does paintings, lithographs, bronzes and plates to the delight of his 15,000-member fan club and a few more like the two pictured in the painting he's working on.