

Creative Living

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Painter records alleys' aesthetics

By Corinne Abalt
staff writer

Ross Arkell's portraits of garages in his new show at Schweyer-Galdo Galleries of Pontiac seem like a complete turn around until you visit him in his home studio.

Then it all begins to make sense. And the natural progression from his subdued, quiet landscapes and often whimsical still lifes to these

large cut-out garages, all oil on canvas, begins to emerge.

Until that point you keep wondering how a guy who loves to paint hills and streams, lakes and flowers could suddenly come up with these half of life size, shaped, fronts of old garages with broken, rusty blinges and peeling paint.

Just as some painters head out to the woods and hills on a Sunday morning before the rest of the world is awake to look for inspiration and scenes

to paint, Arkell heads for the alleys of Detroit with camera, colored pencils and crayons, looking for old, garages.

"They are like folk art," he said, "people do things in their backyard they don't do in front."

THE NEIGHBORHOOD and the front of the houses may be traditional, neat and precise, he said, but the garages are often painted pink or blue or a variety of colors.

To Arkell, these subjects for his show, "Paradise Alley," which older Detroiters may recognize as a pun on an area that used to be called Paradise Valley, are simply another variation of landscape painting.

Building the stretchers in the actual shape of the front of the garage and adding a fanciful flourish along the bottom makes each painting even more intense folk art than the original structures.

He said as he continued to innovate with his shapes he thought to himself, "This is kind of a fun thing to do, so why not do them in the way I'd like to do them." He pointed to the embellishment along the bottom of one and said with a quick smile, "That's just nonsensical counterpoint to the garage itself."

In the later works in the show, this counterpoint is more interesting and better integrated than in the earlier ones, where it occasionally seems a bit self-conscious.

ARKELL IS WORKING and growing at such a fast clip right now that an avalanche of ideas and plans for the future comes tumbling forth every time he opens his mouth.

"I'm gonna finish up more garages. I like the paint to be thick and rich. You'll notice I use a lot of paint. I don't want you to see a particular type of brush stroke. My wife, Judith, (also an artist working in textiles as well as painting) has all this here. I want to take the most bizarre stuff she has, cut it up and inbed it in the paint. I'd like to do a series with women. I still do my landscapes. I love to be outside. I've got a bunch of ideas I want to get out."

The Arkell home is filled with antiques the couple have been collecting since before they were married. They met in a class at the Center for Creative Studies where he came after he got out of military service. One thing they particularly enjoy is antique doll houses. He has repaired several in their collection so skillfully that it's impossible to tell where the repairs were made. Like true collectors, they've made no attempt to restore them to prime condition, preferring to preserve them as they were found.

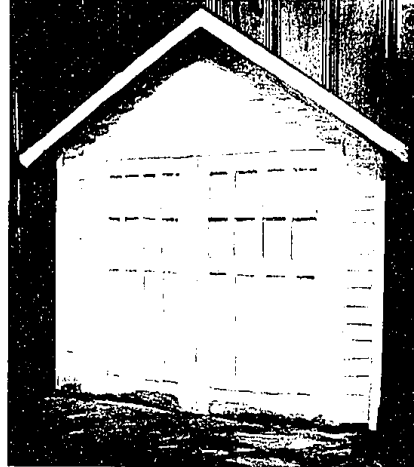
His interest in old things, in structural detail, in history and texture, in weathered beauty and patina, whether on an alley garage door or a maple rope bed all begins to seem natural.

In his paintings, surface is extremely important to him. "I use a round brush. I want the brush to be a mystery. I want things to be separated, strong, identifiable. . . . The brushstroke has to have its own integrity and the colors subtle but separate."

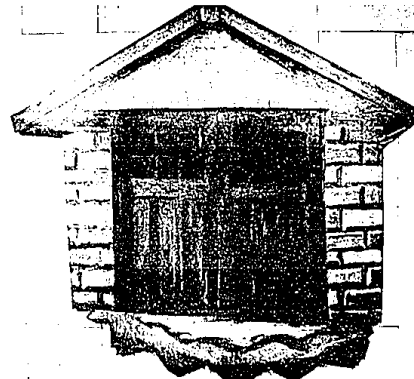
He concluded, "The pleasure is the pleasure of doing it."

He speaks quickly, moves fast, gives his wife a hug, says that she is really a better painter than he is, shuffles the oversize paintings around the antiques delft and promises there will soon be more.

His show at Schweyer-Galdo opens with a 6:30-9 p.m. reception Friday, March 6, and continues through April 3. Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 29 W. Lawrence, Pontiac.



Colors such as purple, plum and aqua make the garages of Detroit almost an art unto themselves.



Arkell began to improvise with the detail at the base of the garage to add the finishing touch to what he considers an interesting aspect of folk art.

Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky



Ross Arkell said he will show a couple of the oil paintings of old cars in his show at Schweyer-Galdo Gallery. Behind him is

the back of a painting showing the complicated stretchers he builds for his paintings.

Figurative sculptor in Sholem Aleichem show

By Corinne Abalt
staff writer

For the third year sculptor Joyce Gottlieb will have her work in the Sholem Aleichem art show March 6, 7 and 8 at Shenandoah Country Club of West Bloomfield.

It's the kind of show that artists and patrons alike return to year after year. Many of Michigan's finest have participated in this show over the years. Many have since achieved national recognition. A lot of buyers return each year to follow the progress of some of their

favorite artists.

Gottlieb, finishing her master's at Eastern Michigan University, working as a dental hygienist in her husband's office and getting a new body of work ready for this show, appears to thrive on this fancy balancing act.

She and her husband are empty nesters now, but not only has Gottlieb lost her youngest daughter, Beth, to college life, she's lost her best and most dependable model.

"She has been my model all along. I've been doing her for eight

years." She touches a full-size hydrostone head of Beth on her kitchen table. It has a bronze like patina. She wants to repair the base. She has also done this one in bronze, but still has work to do after the casting.

Her career as a sculptor started 10 years ago. She had a serious illness and a friend suggested she take a course in ceramics.

"That changed my life," she said. SHE COMPLETED a bachelor's degree in art at Wayne, studied at the Center for Creative Studies with Jay Holland and Sergio DeGiusti and then went to EMU.

"I work in hydrostone, bronze, terra cotta," she paused then added, "I also work in cement. I've always been a figurative sculptor," she said. "I want to have different works in the show (Sholem Aleichem) this year than I had last year."

She had several small ceramic pieces of her son and his fiancée on the kitchen table waiting to be fired. She put her hand on one of the young woman and said, "Primarily what I'm interested in is gesture — the inner expression in I can catch it . . . people are really the only thing that interests me."

She said that until she completes her master's, life is sometimes hectic, sometimes she doesn't get home to get supper on the table for her and her husband until 9:30 p.m. But she gets no complaints from him. She's doing what she likes and is already planning how she will use the free time she will have



Joyce Gottlieb works on her kitchen table until her home studio is refurbished, but what she really hopes to have is a shared studio

outside her home as soon as she finishes her master's at Eastern Michigan University.



Joyce Gottlieb's goal is to catch the essence of her subject, the mood, the inner feeling. This sculpture, which she has displayed on a table in her living room, is an example of that.

Staff photos by
Jerry Zolynsky

once the degree work is completed

— a new shared studio and more art output top her list.

Hours for the Sholem Aleichem art show are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 6, 7 and

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

There will be works by 125 Michigan artists in the show. Shenandoah Country Club is at 5800 Walnut Lake between Farmington and Drake, West Bloomfield.