

Creative Living

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Artist says goodbye after 35 years

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

It will seem odd to say goodbye to Johanna Haas after she's been so much a part of the metropolitan art scene for 35 years. Her highly individual colorful landscapes, village and city scenes have been in many area shows and galleries.

She's ridden the bus from her home on East Jefferson in Detroit to the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association to teach for many years. She studied at Society of Arts and Crafts and completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in art at Wayne State University.

After all that — awards and prizes and representation in a lot of public and private collections — she and her husband, Lother, will move back to their native Germany at the end of this year. Before that they'll be going back and forth to finish the paperwork for his retirement from Chrysler and find a place to live in Munich.

"Munich is my favorite city with museums, galleries, opera and theater," she said. "It's three quarters of an hour from the Alps where many of my landscapes originated. Munich is the city where everybody wants to live. We have close friends there."

But, before all this happens, she will have "A Farewell Show" Friday, June 24 to Saturday, July 9 at Bloomfield Fine Arts, 280 N. Woodward, Birmingham. It is significant that she and Dee Gregg, who owns the gallery, went to the same high school in Frankfurt-Oder, now in East Germany, but didn't meet until after they came here.

Haas said she will have about 45 paintings in the show. "It will be a conglomerate of watercolors and oils — some recent, some never



Johanna Haas's large acrylic of Indian Village will be in her goodbye show at Bloomfield Fine Arts of Birmingham.

shown and some people might have seen before — street scenes, scenes from the Michigan Council of the Arts office on the 12th floor (of a downtown Detroit Building) from where the city looks beautiful. I still try to catch the beauty. I can't paint ugly, that's very hard for me to do." She said she'll also have street

scenes of Indian Village and she'll also show her paintings of rooftops done both here and in Europe. She has done these rooftop scenes in Germany, Austria and Switzerland in watercolor on 400 pound paper. She is a skilled colorist who clings to realism, but is never a slave to it. She brings her own fantasy world to each

painting so that becomes almost an illustration for a fairy tale. She cherishes a quote by the great painter and colorist, Hans Hofmann: "The whole world, as we experience it visually, comes to us through the mystic realm of color. Our entire being is nourished by it." Her satisfaction in her career, she



The move back to Germany after 35 years in Detroit will bring new challenges for Johanna Haas and more time to paint and travel.

said, comes from knowing that her paintings hang in many collections and homes. "That people live with your paintings" and being juried into shows and given prizes by great artists such as Grace Hartigan and Phillip Pearlstein.

"I take visible reality as the starting point, then spread color over the surface like a carpet. I strive for simplification and concentration with the aim of giving a new value to nature through the addition of the

soul and the intellect." Haas suggested that she and her husband are ready for a change. She will have more time to paint and to travel with her husband. "I'm really looking forward to it."

Her show will continue through Saturday, July 9. Reception for the artist 6-9 p.m. Friday, June 24. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 8 p.m. Thursday, 280 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

Car painting to be unveiled at Grand Prix

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

It doesn't take much for Jim Bisignano of Birmingham to move a mountain or a bridge — all in a day's work for a studio painter.

His painting of two USF&G sponsored Formula 1 cars at the Brazil Grand Prix earlier this year will be officially unveiled this weekend. The occasion will be a USF&G party during Detroit's Formula 1 race named this year the EniChrom-Grand Prix. The painting is the third of a series he's done for the same sponsor.

Bisignano went to Brazil to photograph the race — 17 rolls of 36 — to set the scene and have the details all in order. He is meticulous in depiction of the cars and the drivers, although he takes a poetic, artistic license with backgrounds. He wanted the mountains of Brazil in the picture to give the painting a strong identity. He's seen them, they definitely are there, but not quite at the spot where he shows them. He has spent more than three months working on the painting and a week before the unveiling was putting the final touches on it.

He plays classical music tapes while he works and he had the final afternoon of work set up as a three-opera act. Opera suited his mood for that very special, final day. "Music sets the energy level . . . when you get three of those dudes (soloists) singing at the same time, you get a lot of energy." Standing beside the painting, he said, "This whole situation never existed and never will exist . . . I had to move the mountain about a quarter of a mile. For last year's painting (of the Detroit Grand Prix), I had to move the Ambassador Bridge about half a mile."

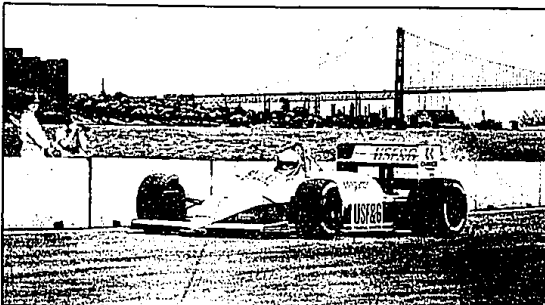
THE COMMISSION for the new painting came complete with challenges. He was to include two USF&G Formula 1 cars, the one with British driver Derek Warwick and one with American driver Eddie Cheever — both the central subject, both equidistant from the finish line. To be sure he had done it right, he ran an imaginary line through the center of the front wheels of the cars.

"Saying racing people are 'very nationalistic,'" he pointed to the Union Jack on Warwick's helmet and the stars and stripes on Cheever's car.

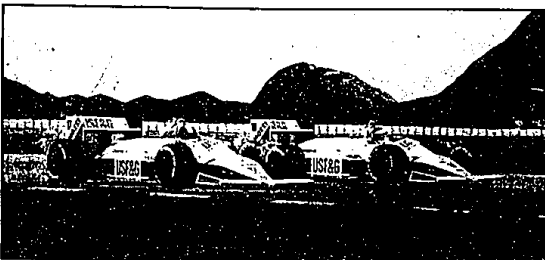
Bisignano, a familiar figure on the Grand Prix circuit, will be back at the edge of the track, again this weekend taking pictures to document this year's race for his now seemingly inexhaustible files.



Jim Bisignano, left, and his brother, John, right, enjoy the company of many Formula One drivers such as Eddie Cheever, center, who will be racing in Detroit this weekend.



Eddie Cheever is the driver in Jim Bisignano's painting of the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Brazil earlier this year. That's the one Bisignano will unveil this weekend.



Bisignano is completing two paintings of the Detroit Grand Prix winners in 1985 and 1986 for Keith Crain of Crain Communications.

His brother, John of Breckenridge, Colo., who covers the races for ESPN, cable sports network, shares his interest and enthusiasm for the sport.

Fabrics shape her canvas

By Manon Mellgaard
special writer

It isn't difficult to detect Lyn Parker's earlier career as a textile designer in her layered, sculptured and richly textured wall canvases, diptychs and wood-framed collages on paper.

Her "Remnant Series II" is at Ilona and Gallery of Farmington Hills through June 24. Her works team with energetic, gestural movement. On a canvas backing she applies a variety of materials — vinyl, cheese-cloth, fabric remnants — and adds layer upon layer of rhexplex, a soft, milky medium, which mixed with acrylics creates a luscious effect of dimension, gloss and color. Her canvases are both tactile and sensual; inviting to be touched.

Some of the paintings consist of two or three separate, layered pieces. The surfaces suggest landscape terrain, biological themes (such as birth) or animal abstractions. Each manifests a feeling of life, nature and energy.

Although not consciously planned, certain images come to mind, and these are reflected in the evocative names. For example, there is a flowing, winged look to the three-layered, two-dimensional "Embryonic Bird," with its textured surface, jagged edges and glowing pastel colors.

"Has Anyone Seen My Pet Bull" has a discernible taurine quality in a vigorous collage embellished with sequins and beads. The jagged (irregular) edge is a trade-mark feature of Parker's work. "If the edge isn't just right," said the artist, "I'll take a chunk out and start again."

Her use of color is again, gloriously

ly sensual, with dark under-painting overlaid with layers of mauves, purples, pinks, grays and blues, with subtle touches of yellow or gold paint for emphasis. She always paints directly onto the wall, and mostly in a diagonal, bold rhythmic motion.

One heavily textured canvas called "Cornucopia" resembles a fruit bowl with its deeper colors and inclusion of metal on a mesh backing.

"I'm very much a mood painter," she said. "Each piece reflects what I feel at a particular time. I'm always looking for unusual fabrics with texture and my work junk pile is full of odd remnants and found objects."

Parker has lived in Farmington for the last 13 years. She has a degree from the Textile Design Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, a bachelor's in psychology from Kean College, Union, N.J., and attended the graduate program in developmental psychology at Oakland University from 1975-1976.

Her work has been exhibited at the Carol Hooberman Gallery, Birmingham, Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association and Detroit Focus Gallery.

She strikes a vibrant, receptive chord when she says, "these are very physical paintings — I want the observer to encounter the weight of the painting and the physicality of the surface."

"Remnant Series II" by Lyn Parker will continue at Ilona and Gallery, through June 24, 31045 Orchard Lake Road, Hunter's Square Mall, Farmington Hills. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 9 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Lyn Parker's acrylic on canvas, 41 by 56 inches, is titled "Triangular Horse." Her show continues at Ilona and Gallery of Farmington Hills through June 24.

