

Creative Living

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(F1E)

Thrill of the chase lingers on

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

THE PLEASURE THAT COLLECTING art has brought to George Brewer of Birmingham led him to smile many times as he walked around Meadow Brook Art Gallery before the show "Contemporary Art from the Collection of Maxine and George Brewer" opened.

He adjusted a piece or two and complimented Kilch Usul, curator, on the way the show was hung. It wasn't easy Usul commented because the works are so diverse. Still, after deliberation, he found the links and relationships which give this collection a special, provocative flavor.

This show opens with a 3-5 p.m. reception Sunday. Hope Palmer will give a lecture about the collection at 3 p.m. "Chinese Art," gift of Mr. and Mrs. Amitendranth Tagore, is showing in the south gallery simultaneously. Both exhibits will continue through Nov. 19.

Maxine Brewer died in March of 1985. The couple had been married for 18 years and during that time they collected and enjoyed art with a passion. Her presence in the exhibit is strong, not only is she represented by a painting and a sculpture which she herself did, but many of the others bring stories to mind that Brewer tells with great joy. He has also written these remembrances and they are included in the catalog.

He said, "My father was a collector. My first father-in-law was an art dealer, but I consider myself Maxine's student."

HER EYE FOR ART, sometimes operating as swiftly as a single glance, was a great source of inspiration to him. In his reminiscences he remembers asking her what caused those "irresistible urges to buy?" They decided that it wasn't the specific type of art that moved them, such as abstract or op or folk art, but rather a quality which they termed "abbreviated reality."

He wrote, "This does not only cover paintings, but also three-dimensional pieces like the 'Himalaya' by Todd Warner and soft sculptures like Wendy Meidner's 'Chorus Girls'."

Three outstanding examples of this abbreviated reality hang on one wall — "Cave Garden Bay II" by Alex Katz, "The Temptation of Santa Rita" by Fernando Botero and "Plantadores de Bananas" by Brazilian artist d'Janira. While this is an unlikely group of three, it's fascinating to see how each artist has refined the image down to the sparest details and caught the very essence of the subject.

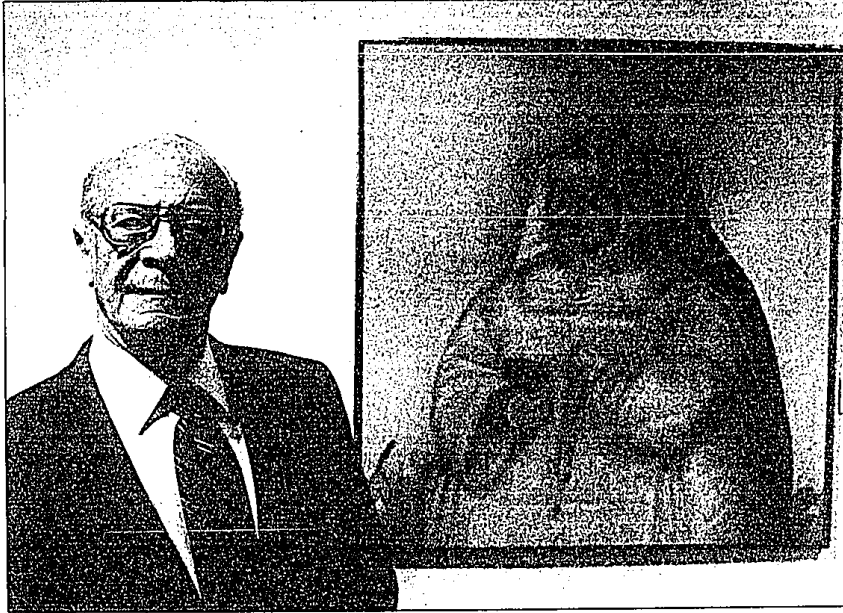
Botero's nun, so tightly held in by her clothing, looks like she was inflated with an air pump. Without the tiny sparkle in her eyes behind what appear to be super thick lenses, the small apple over Santa Rita's head wouldn't make any sense at all. Very small in the background, but carrying large impact is the smoking volcano which could be about the geography, the political situation of Brazil or Santa Rita's heart.

WHEN BREWER WROTE to the artist, and correspondence with the artist has brought particular pleasure, Botero wrote back, "This is one of my best."

They had heard a lecture by Henry Geldzahler, then curator of modern art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whom Brewer affectionately calls "my hero." A quote from that lecture became almost a credo for the couple. "When I see a piece of art and it hits me in the guts — pleasantly or unpleasantly — so that every detail is engraved forever in my inner eye and when I find on careful study that it is a good work, then I know it's a masterpiece." Brewer found such a painting hanging "between the checkroom and the washroom of the Museum of Modern Art" and a two-year long chase to find the artist began. At a gallery in Houston, Texas, they bought the painting which Botero later titled, "The Temptation of Santa Rita."

On a trip to South America, they found and immediately decided to buy the carved wooden folk art sculpture of Padre Cleoro de Josciera in a flea market in Rio de Janeiro. Brewer likes to tell the story of how Padre Cleoro negotiated the release of a hostage taken by the bandit, La Piorra.

He added with no hesitation, "We



George Brewer of Birmingham stands beside "The Temptation of Santa Rita" by Fernando Botero, which is part of his collection on display at Meadow Brook Gallery of Oakland University

in Rochester. This is one of several that he is giving to the University.

always agreed on what to buy, yes, we always agreed."

EBAS HE WATCHED THE INSTALLATION of the show, he turned the 20-inch high black ceramic church around in the case, so the entrance could be seen better and recalled the story he tells in the reminiscences. They were in Mexico when

they saw it and both liked it immediately, he remembers he said, "Too bad we cannot take it home." His wife replied, "George, when I want something, I don't have trouble getting it home."

He has donated several works to Oakland University, one being the Botero painting of Santa Rita. He

continues to see and buy art and his interest in local artists is apparent, for there are pieces by Michigan artists Lois Teicher, Richard Doerer and former Cranbrook faculty member Jun Kaneko.

Maxine Brewer studied art at Andre L'Hote atelier in Paris and at the Society of Arts and Crafts (now

Center for Creative Studies) in Detroit and served on the board there from the late 1940s to the early 70s.

He is recognized for his scientific contribution in the development of the electrocoating process to protect the inner surface of an automobile body against corrosion at Ford Motor Company.

Children's book authors to star at fall luncheon

Two outstanding contributors to children's literature will be the guests for the fall program of the Birmingham Bloomfield Children's Book & Author Society at noon Tuesday, Oct. 24, at Temple Beth El of Bloomfield Township.

The program which always attracts librarians and teachers as well as parents, writers and other professionals in the literary field, features a luncheon, followed by an hour-long program.

The guests, Gail Gibbons and Robert Kimmel Smith, will sign books and talk informally with guests following their program.

Gibbons writes and illustrates her many "way things work" books — from how libraries are run to the way clocks work. She was a successful TV graphic artist and animator who was suddenly launched as a successful writer/illustrator of children's books after "Willy and His Wheel Wagon," which explained the new math set theory, was published in 1975.

She went on to write about weather forecasting, skyscrapers, museums, TV production, boats, tools, parakeets, zoos, trains, holidays and other subjects. "Sunken Treasure," written in 1988, is about finding the wreck of the Spanish galleon, Atocha, which sunk off Key West in 1622.

Smith begins his writing career creating advertising copy. After 10 years with major agencies, he switched to writing children's books and won immediate acclaim producing "Charlie Fever" was published in 1970. His characters tell their own stories, conveying both the humor and frustration of growing up.

"Jelly Belly" (1981) is about a fifth grader on a diet, a subject



with which Smith says he is all too familiar. "The War with Grandpa" (1984) which won 10 national awards, and "Mostly Michael" (1987) are written in a "story for school" form and diary form respectively. His most recent book, "Bobby Baseball," was doubtless inspired by Smith's two ambitions when he was a youngster — to write books and to pitch for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He and his wife and two children are ardent baseball fans.

Deadline for reservations is Monday, Oct. 16. Send check for \$20 to Birmingham Bloomfield Children's Book and Author Society, BCBAS, Baldwin Library, 300 W. Merrill, Birmingham, 48012. Temple Beth El is on the northwest corner of 14 Mile and Telegraph, Bloomfield Township. There is ample parking behind the building.

Wayne honors art's doers

Local art patrons and university supporters Paul and Sue Nine along with Gere Baskin of Birmingham, Barbara Selinger of Farmington and three other alumni will be honored at the Arts Achievement Awards program at 4 p.m. Saturday at Wayne State University.

The annual awards program is part of the Celebration of the Arts, being held Friday and Saturday.

Other alumni to be honored are: art education, Alan Mette; English, William Harris; music, David Wagner; and theater, Frederick Coffin.

Activities are free and open to the public. The celebration opens with readings of prose and poetry plus a new dramatic work by William Harris at 2 p.m., Friday in 150 General Lectures Auditorium.

A choice of three events is offered at 8 p.m. Friday. David Wagner will play compositions by Bach, Franch, Bohm, Hindemith and Delphin Strungk on the 50-rank pipe organ in the Community Arts Auditorium; the Hilberry Theater (577-2972) will present "Philadelphia Story" by Philip Barry. The Bonstelle Theater (577-2961) will feature "Mr. Roberts" by Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan.

A WSU Dance Faculty Concert at 2 p.m. in the General Lectures Auditorium will lead into the presentation of the Arts Achievement Awards at 4 p.m. Saturday in the McGregor Memorial Conference Center.

An opening reception for two exhibitions, "Works of Art in Metal" by Alan Mette and "Alumni Photography," follows at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Arts Gallery.

PAUL AND SUE NINE are being honored for their untiring support of the arts at the university. Currently, Sue, who earned a bachelor's degree in speech, is vice president of the Understudies (theater), committee member for the President's Preview, chairman of the Welcome Luncheon for the Hilberry Repertory Company and co-chair of the Hilberry end-of-season party for the company.

The Nines were co-chairs for the Lily Tomlin benefit performance in 1988. She is a board or executive member of many Michigan service organizations and office manager for Nine and Master, his legal firm.

The Nines were awarded the WSU Alumni Association Homer Strong Award in 1984. He also received a Corporate Leadership Award in 1985. He received a bachelor's degree in political science and history in 1962 and a juris doctor degree in 1966, graduating first in his class. He is also president of the Grand Traverse Development Co. in Traverse City.

Baskin, Birmingham, is director of the Detroit Focus Gallery in Detroit and publisher of the Detroit Focus Quarterly. She is the Midwest representative for the National Association of Artist Organizations in Washington, D.C. At WSU, Baskin earned a bachelor's-of-science degree in



Barbara Selinger of Farmington, teaches at Oakland Community College and was named teacher of the year by Michigan Dance Association in 1987.



Paul and Sue Nine of Bloomfield Hills share an interest in the arts, their aims mater and business.

education, a master's in museology and a master's in art history.

Students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have ranked Mette as an "Outstanding Teacher" each term since he became associate professor in the spring of 1982. His art work has been reviewed in national and international journals, books and periodicals and presented in exhibitions across the country, in Japan, West Germany and Canada. Mette earned a bachelor's-of-science in 1978.

AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, choreographer and teacher for the Detroit Dance Collective, Selinger is accomplished in modern dance and ballet. She is an instructor at Oakland Community College, a consultant for the Michigan Dance Association and has conducted workshops, seminars and master classes.

Selinger was an instructor at WSU from 1977-1984. Her performances include WSU from American University in Washington, D.C.; Macomb Center for the Performing Arts; Interlochen and the Detroit Institute of Arts. She was named Dance Teacher of the Year in 1987 by the Michigan Dance Association. Selinger earned a master's in education in 1978.



Gere Baskin, Birmingham, is director of Detroit Focus Gallery and is Midwest representative for the National Association of Artist Organizations in Washington D.C.

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