

# CREATIVE LIVING

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1992



MARY KLEMIC

## Artist Wilbert brings floral portraits to life

A visit to the Donald Morris Gallery, 105 Townsend in Birmingham, can dispel any chill in the air and gray skies. Featured at the gallery now through Jan. 16 is an exhibit of watercolors and charcoal drawings by Robert Wilbert. The display's sole theme is the floral still life.

But "still life" isn't a fair name for these works. They almost come alive, with their rich colors and warm feeling.

In Wilbert's art, a single petal is a small treasure chest of colors and shades. Each mum in one bouquet bursts like a sun. Another cluster features one red flower that stands out like a badge.

In "Night Roses," the flowers stretch out to the right. Wilbert's signature is in the upper left corner, as if to balance it. An arrangement of zinnias reaches out on both sides like open arms of offering to embrace the viewer.

Adding to the friendliness of the paintings are the individual vases, pitchers, goblets and other containers that hold the flowers, as well as the items alongside them. Some containers seem elegant, others practical. The items include a clay pipe, a light bulb, a pencil and a toy piano.

It's easy to imagine that different people own each of these arrangements and donated them to the show, and to wonder what each owner is like.

The sparse setting emphasizes the flowers in each work. Whether they rest on a bureau or stool, or a gently blurred base, the floral beauty comes through vibrant and clear.

### Flowing figures

Another type of life is honored in "Life Form: A Woman's View," a one-person show by sculptor Suzanne Young. The exhibit continues now to Dec. 23 at the Lawrence Street Gallery, 29 W. Lawrence in Pontiac.

"My creations focus on the similarities of women and men — strength, movement and loving, connection with self and others," the sculptor said.

The works "reflect this 'androgyny of self' while celebrating the uniqueness of the human form."

Young's sculpted pieces, both nude male and female forms, have a graceful, flowing line that suggests they are floating in air, on water or in spirit. One appears to be part of a tree.

The figures seem at peace. If one is looking down, it is to gaze at another figure and not because of dejection. Happiness, confidence, hope, tranquility are among the feelings presented by their faces.

Yet there's a sense of drama to the figures. Some have backgrounds of raku glaze. It's as if they are within a mineral recently excavated from the earth and are ready to be fired. Another wall piece features three small figures on a flat background of a larger figure.

### Spinning stories

An exhibit continuing to Dec. 24 at The Wetman Collection, 132 N. Woodward in Birmingham, weaves a special spell.

The display, "Kindred Visions: Weavers/Storytellers," features textiles by 11 contemporary artists who explore the use of the narrative in their work. Seven of the artists graduated from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills.

Bhakti Ziek's long work has African designs. Laura Foster Nicholson makes a garden bed and a fern stand, complete with plants. Emily DuBois' images are more hypnotic, with different textures and colors that gently merge. One of her works, "Feather Ghost," looks like a canyon at sunset. Margaret Hluch uses metallic thread and tropical colors to make an abstract flower.

Fuyuko Matsubara features strange creatures with long ears that seem to inhabit two intersecting planes. Sandra Brownlee-Ramsdale's "Creation Series," consisting of small panels with primitive figures, buzzes with energy.

## Artist exhibits works

Theresa Polltowicz, a Michigan Artist Guild member, will exhibit her nationally recognized watercolors in Autumn Arts & Crafts, a juried show of fine art and crafts, this weekend.

The Northville artist will showcase her latest originals and prints.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12-13, at Domino's Farms, Ann Arbor.

Take US 23 to Exit 41. Go east on Plymouth Road and north on Earhart Road. Call 313-971-7424. Admission is \$1.

Artist David Fleck, formerly of Farmington, brings special holiday cheer to businesses and homes with the decorations he paints on windows — and just about anything else.

BY MARY KLEMIC  
STAFF WRITER



Amid the symphony of cooking — the sizzling and the steaming and the stirring — at Greene's Hamburgers at 10 Mile and Orchard Lake Road in Farmington, David Fleck went to work, sending up something special of his own.

Instead of waving a spatula, Fleck wielded a paintbrush. He is an artist with a glass canvas that looks out on the world. That is, he decorates windows of businesses and houses in the area and around the country.

With a few swift, sweeping strokes, Fleck painted a red bow. With different brushes and different movements he made a wreath, berries, snowflakes and snow-covered trees.

As he painted, skillfully creating a holiday scene in acrylic in a matter of minutes, he talked about his background and his work. "It makes me feel pretty good. I'm not so bad. I make people feel pretty happy," said Fleck, who was born and raised in Farmington.

"I like the spontaneity of it. It's quick." Residents of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Fleck and his wife, Lynn, travel around the country doing painting projects. They always return to Farmington for the holidays. Fleck's father and eight brothers and sisters live "in and around" Farmington, Howell and White Lake.

"Christmas is my favorite season only because this time of year is so much fun." Fleck creates window wonderlands for about 150 buildings every Christmas, usually between Nov. 15 and Dec. 15. Other times of the year he does a variety of decorations, including for Halloween and special events. He gauges the jobs as he paints three or four buildings a day.

"We have grand openings. We have potpourri. We have whatever you want," the artist said, jokingly taking on a rapid-fire sales pitch.

The Flecks' friendliness fit in well with the pleasant atmosphere at Greene's, where the light conversation between customers and employees was a gentle counterpart to the bustling activity in the grill. Greene's manager Steve McAuley was pleased with the annual artistry that puts palette to pane.

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See WINDOWS, 4D



Graphic work: "Big Brother," a silkscreen print by Walter Dahn, has a childlike quality, on display at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum.

Artbeat features various happenings in the suburban arts world. Send news leads to: Creative Living, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

For information and reviews of musical performances, please turn to the Entertainment section.

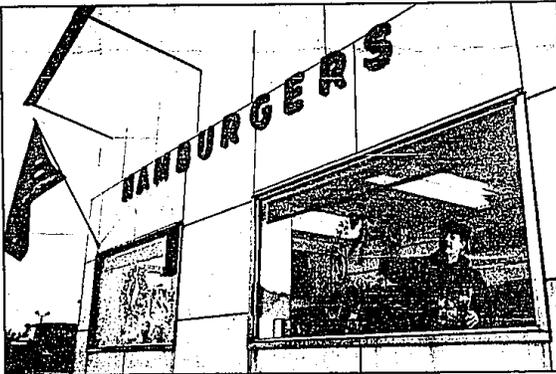
### PRINT EXHIBIT

To celebrate a decade of fine art printmaking by Birmingham printer Stewart and Stewart, the Washtenaw Community College Foundation organized a touring exhibition, "Collaboration in Print: Stewart and Stewart Prints 1989-1990" that traveled around Michigan, Ohio and Missouri. The exhibit, featuring 66 full-color prints, is at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Ar.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BREZLER

Clear cheer: Fleck adorns the windows of Greene's Hamburgers in Farmington with yuletide art. The acrylic paint sends special season's greetings to passersby as well as to people inside.



## German graphics on display at Cranbrook

BY MARY KLEMIC  
STAFF WRITER

The crumbling, collapsing Berlin Wall is arguably the strongest image of Germany in the 1980s.

But other images from Germany in that decade could come to mind after a visit to an exhibit continuing through Jan. 31 at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 600 Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills.

The display, "Graphics of the '80s" from the Federal Republic of Germany," features prints and photographs showing the diversity of German art.

Architecture is a theme that runs through many of the works. Gunter

### Artist interview.

Forg presents prints of houses and windows, with clean, simple lines. His work also includes sheets with bold vertical lines. Markus Lupert's linocuts, "Harlequin," feature a figure in a chair, so rigid it could be part of the chair.

Helmut Middendorf's silkscreen prints "Large Urban Head" and "Untitled" convey the feeling of the city. The former shows buildings in the background that become part of the large face dominating the scene. "Un-

See CRANBROOK, 5D

## Art Beat

bor now to Dec. 16. Gallery hours are noon to 2 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. The prints will be available for sale. Call 973-3300 for more information.

### IN THE BAG

Now to Dec. 19, Caryn Shaye Designs Inc., in Market Street Shoppes at 29370 Northwestern Highway in Southfield, offers holiday gifts in custom designed handbags, American and

Czechoslovakian wooden jewelry from the 1920s to 1950s from two private collections, antique and contemporary purses and handbags, Chinese porcelain boxes, antique belt buckles and combs. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday-Friday and noon to 6 p.m. Saturday. Holiday sweets and beverages will be available. Call 353-6220.

### CRANBROOK SALE

A holiday sale continues to Dec. 13 at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum Bookstore, 600 Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills. Art museum members will receive an extra 15 percent discount on regular-priced merchandise. In addition, in-store specials will be offered. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday. Call 646-3325.