

CREATIVE LIVING

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Art work in progress

Cranbrook guests see, act in change



Visitors to the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills will see a work of art in progress. The installation by Tony Hepburn, the new Cranbrook artist in residence, encourages the audience to consider art from more than just sight.

BY MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

With his current exhibition at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Tony Hepburn is knocking down barriers as he builds up objects. He is opening himself and his art up to the viewers as he encloses himself within a giant clay vessel.

This apparent paradox is on display in Hepburn's installation in progress, "Do Not Think About the Blue Door," at the museum, 1221 N. Woodward in Bloomfield Hills. The exhibit will be on view through March 28, during which time Hepburn, the new artist-in-residence and head of the ceramics department at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, will work on the installation.

Visitors may ask the artist about the work, which fills one room, and

interact with it in special ways. It's a challenge to the artist as well as to the visitor.

The audience won't be presented with a completed piece in a quiet room where people speak in whispers and signs warn not to touch anything. All their senses will be involved.

"It's all to do with the human presence," Hepburn said. "Even though everything in (a museum) is made by people, there's a separation. The human quality dissipates."

And the artist won't be working in the privacy of a studio.

"It forces you to respond in a way that you don't normally do in a studio," Hepburn said.

"This kind of allows us to use the museum as a laboratory or studio," said associate curator David D.J. Rau. "Art isn't always something you put on a pedestal or on a wall."

Opening doors

The name of the installation comes from a psychological experiment. In the experiment, after a group of people was told not to think about a blue door, every one of them thought about it.

A visitor enters the room at Cranbrook through two mammoth-blue doors. One of the first things seen is an arrangement of 100 ceramic heads on the opposite wall, blindfolded with cloth. The eyes don't have it all when it comes to this installation.

The heads rest on shelves also containing tools made from burl wood, the part of a tree not usually viewed. It's a hint to get under the surface.

To the right is a stack of bowls turned upside down. The subtle message is a suggestion to flip things over and consider them another way.

Also to the right is structure featuring two ladders made of boards and tree branches. A drawing of this is on the opposite wall. To draw it, Hep-



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAN DEAN

Through the doors: Tony Hepburn, the new head of the ceramics department at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, will continue work on his exhibition while it is on display at the museum.

burn had to rely on memory, as his back is to the actual structure.

Vessel view

Two large clay vessel forms will be featured. The smaller one, about 4 feet high, may be filled with potpourri. That way, a sense besides sight would be involved. The larger one will stand between the two ladders. Hepburn will spend some time inside it, working on it or just sitting in it.

"When people come in and make nasty comments I'll yell 'Wrong!'" he joked.

Whether visitors talk with Hepburn or just hear his hands patting the inside surface of the vessel, there will be a sense of something happening.

Artist background

Hepburn was trained as a painter. He was painting still lifes and landscapes when a friend who worked in ceramics invited him to make a pot. The introduction to ceramics began Hepburn's fascination with the medium.

See DOOR, 3E



MARY KLEMIC

Fantastic furnishings take up residence

It's furniture with a twist — and a new angle here and a curve there.

It's a display of original, one-of-a-kind "new baroque" furniture by students in the furniture design program at the Center for Creative Studies.

The exhibit of furniture designs, maquettes and interior design models — along with fine arts, crafts, photography and music by CCS students — opens today at Zeising Associates Inc. at the Michigan Design Center, 1700 Stutz in Troy, and continues through March 27. To see the pieces, call Zeising Associates at 649-3996.

"I think it's very professional looking," William House, chairman of the CCS industrial design department, said of the work.

"It's very unusual. We based it on new baroque, which was built on the original baroque period using multiple materials in varied ways."

Among the students whose works are shown are Falruz Arabo of West Bloomfield and Gonzalo Rodriguez of Rochester.

Skeletal outline

Arabo is in her fifth year at CCS. She has a two-year fine arts background and is in her third year in furniture design. Her plans are to make custom-designed furniture for residential homes.

One of the considerations in designing the pieces in the show was negative space. (An example of this is the space in the handle of a coffee mug.)

"That was a big challenge," Arabo said. "You can't have too much, but I wanted it to be very light and elegant and functional."

One of Arabo's works is a table featuring slender, graceful, steel legs and a cast bronze top.

Each of the four legs consists of three rods spaced apart. One of these rods from each leg flows over the top of the table, seeming to rest on it as gently as a finger. A star is formed on the top where sections of the table meet.

Suspended glass over the bronze adds a floating feel to the piece.

For all its airy quality, the table actually contains a most earthly material: the remains of a bon constrictor.

"I wanted to see if I could (use) two totally different techniques."

The legs are cold formed steel rods, made by hammering steel over a block of wood. No heat was used.

The snake remains came from a viper that was already dead. Hilda Tisdormy in Clawson found the snake in Florida for Arabo.

Personal process

Arabo arranged the snake in order from head to tail over clay. She made a urethane mold from this, into which she poured wax to make a cast for the bronze tabletop.

"There are more than 200 bones in that piece."

Another work by Arabo is a stacked wood piece she describes as more sculptural than functional. It is made of poplar, connected by a 1/8-inch steel rod topped by a brass disc. The piece resembles part of a star. Brackets could be hung at either end, Arabo said.

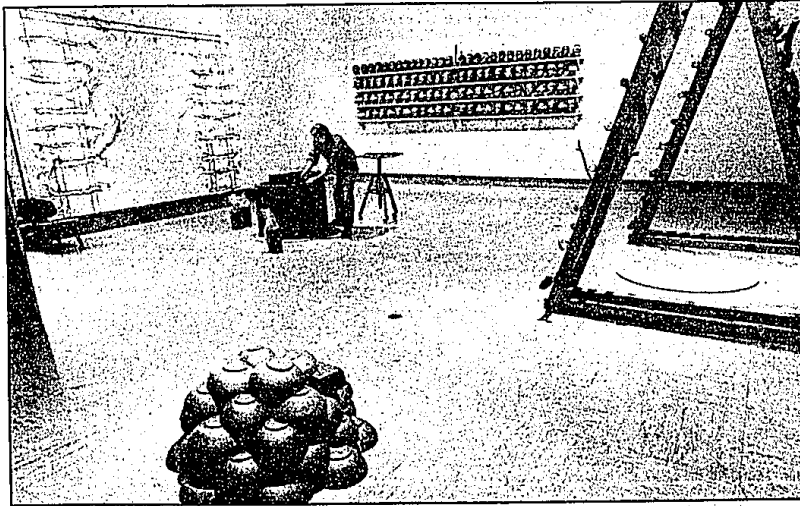
See DESIGNS, 6D



Cabinet: Gonzalo Rodriguez of Rochester, a student at the Center for Creative Studies, designed this cabinet to look like a building. Works by Rodriguez and other CCS students are exhibited at the Michigan Design Center in Troy.



Artist at work: Hepburn wants museum visitors to get involved with his installation.



Artistic exercise: Hepburn's installation challenges visitors to consider art from more than just sight. The artist will continue work on the display, which will include a large clay vessel he will occupy.

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.

■ SOCIETY SESSION

The Michigan Oriental Art Society will meet at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28, at the Troy Public Library, 510 W. Big Beaver Road. The meeting, which is open to the public, will feature an in-

Art Beat

formative panel discussion concerning the highs and lows and various other aspects of collecting.

■ ART AND ANTIQUE

The 11th biennial art and antique auction of the Cranbrook Academy of Art is set for Thursday-Sunday, April 1-4, at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 500 Lone Pine Road in

Bloomfield Hills. Call 645-3300 for more information.

A preview party will take place 6:30-9 p.m. Wednesday, March 31. Hours for the sale are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 1-4. The auction will take place 7 p.m. April 3.

Tickets are \$35 per person, including the auction and preview, or \$125 per person, including the auction, the preview and dinner in the museum. Admission to the sale of non-auction items and the museum is free.

More than 1,000 donated art and antique items, including art by Cranbrook artists, will be priced to sell. The auction, by Sotheby's of New York, will feature 50 select art and antique items.