



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1993

CREATIVE LIVING

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MARY KLEMIC

Artist takes bough as D.C. tree lauds crafts

Christmas was always special for Claudia Tann of Farmington Hills. Tann and her sister, Sheryl, had fun decorating and planning for the holiday. This year Tann's decorating takes on extra significance.

Tann, a ceramist, is one of the artists from around the country selected to have their ornaments included in the decoration of the 1993 White House Christmas tree. This year's tree is honoring the Year of the American Craft.

"I was excited. I was very excited," said Tann, who has been working with clay for about 10 years. "(Sheryl) liked Christmas a lot. It was one of my sister's favorite holidays. . . Her house was transformed at Christmas time, a spectacular place.

"It was in her memory. I thought of her a lot."

Sheryl died in 1992. Tann's contribution to the White House tree is a ceramic angel. A two-dimensional form of the ornament is available for purchase at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association holiday sales show, continuing through Dec. 11 at the BBAA, 1516 S. Cranbrook Road in Birmingham (call 644-0866). Two other artists in the show, Brian and Sharon Driscoll of Higgins Lake, also have ornaments on the White House tree.

"I got a letter from the mail asking if I wanted to participate (in decorating the White House tree). I said 'Yes, of course, absolutely.'"

The ornament for Washington, D.C., had to meet specifications. It had to be a three-dimensional angel, between five and 18 inches tall, weigh 12 ounces or less and be hung with gold cord.

Tann's angel consists of head and wings and is about six inches tall. It features little jingle bells and gold.

"She was 'really cute. . . She looked real sweet."

The White House tree, measuring 19 feet 6 inches, will bear about 7,000 ornaments. Tann is thinking of taking a tour to view the tree.

"That would be kind of fun."

Tann, who studied metal and fiber at the Center for Creative Studies, is a member of the Michigan Guild of Artisans. Besides the BBAA show, she will take part in the Oakland Community College Potters Market Friday-Sunday, Dec. 3-5, at 870 Horace Brown Drive, two blocks south of 13 Mile between Stephenson Highway and John R in Madison Heights (call 544-4974).

She works in jewelry and ornaments. "I'm trying to make my Christmas ornaments my bread and butter and jewelry my raspberry jam."

See PERSPECTIVES, 5E



Woodland Santa: Ellen Masty of Birmingham adorns her Santas in unusual costumes. This Claus is dressed in pine cones and fir.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Creative Living next week:

- A visit with Troy artist Glen Michaels, whose exhibit of sculpture and painting will be at the Rubiner Gallery in West Bloomfield.
- Mertly Figley's Garden Spot column.
- Exhibitions, art gallery event listings.



Getting personal: The timelessness of a relationship bound by love is captured by Seiter in the above portrait of Debbie and Jordan Dumars, wife and son of Detroit Pistons star Joe Dumars. At right: Seiter caught Jennifer Knight, 4, of Bloomfield Hills in a thoughtful mood.



Photographer shoots for the soul with portraits

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Pat Seiter aims for dramatic black and white photographs that capture a piece of the soul. At Epic Studios in Bloomfield Hills, opened by Seiter Aug. 1, she focuses on freezing emotions and mannerisms of children in fine art portraits lasting a lifetime.

"What's so special about my work is I'm capturing the personality of a child and doing it in a dramatic way. I'm capturing the soul of that little human being," said the 40-year-old photographer.

Seiter's images tell a story. While some are pensive portraits, others bring a smile to the viewer.

"Each child I do is different. I'm looking for a personality. I look for that one expression that knocks your socks off when you capture the personality of what the child's about. "I'm looking for that look, like I caught a piece of the soul."

Photo philosophy

Photographing children is an art in itself. To accomplish this, Seiter employs a philosophy based on shooting two rolls of film within the first five minutes while the child explores a new environment. The unknown serves as a catalyst to produce emotions ranging from ardent to coy.

Seiter, who if she hadn't become a portrait photographer would have been a psychologist, believes when children are brought into the strange, darkened studio they will spend the first five minutes learning what it's all about. Their awareness at peak, Seiter starts snapping.

"From 9 months to 7 years children are absorbing information like a sponge.

"I bring them into a surrounding that's not normal. In those five minutes they're absorbed with everything — the camera, the backdrop, who is this strange person and what is she doing?"

At this point time races by. Seiter must hurry to productively use the precious minutes to her advantage. She searches through the viewfinder

to incorporate a number of elements into the image.

Exactly what is it she looks for through the lens of her Hasselblad camera? Is it a certain gesture, a look in the eye, a magic spark?

"It's all in the composition. If they just look curious, what they're doing is thinking. I look for the innocence. With kids you don't have to play with eyes. They're fresh."

Fine art is what she's after, Seiter says, not just a \$14.95 package of photos to give Grandma and Grandpa.

"If somebody wants something dif-

ferent. If they want quality, it's a fine art piece you're going to display on the wall and that as the child grows older a mother can say, 'Janie still looks that way when she's thinking.'"

Stunning images

Seiter was influenced by the dramatic photographs of the 1930s and Hollywood stars like Greta Garbo. In her black and white images she uses light to create a mood.

"It's just like Rembrandt's lighting. In photography, you paint by light."

See PHOTOGRAPHER, 5E



DAVE FRIEDWITZ

Tottering for success: Bloomfield Hills photographer Pat Seiter is best known for creating the cover of "Detroit Powers and Personalities," a book by Tim Kiska. Here she provokes the curiosity of 2-year-old Zachary Hitchcock of Bloomfield Hills.

Alumni return in style

■ Three graduates of the Cranbrook Academy of Art have returned to present their individual styles in a special exhibit at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum.

By MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER



The dictionary defines "converge" as "to come together at a point."

Artistic talent in different media come together at a fascinating point in "Cranbrook Convergence," a current exhibit at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum.

The show continues through Jan. 23 at 1221 Woodward in Bloomfield Hills. It is the first time Cranbrook alumni were brought together for such an exhibit.

At first it doesn't seem that the works by featured artists John Donoghue, Ron Leax and Laura Foster Nicholson have anything in common. Donoghue is a ceramist showing new large plates and vessel forms. Leax is a sculptor who built a new installation for the display. Nicholson is a fiber artist presenting tapestries based on the current gardens at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home.

But a visitor entering the rooms is invited to explore how the pieces are in harmony while keeping each artist's distinct style intact and separate. The works are arranged in a way that suggests the convergence from the beginning: A tapestry showing garden tools is on a wall near a vase, which stands before a partition, over which ferns from the installation peek as if they were about to be placed in the vessel.

Ceramist

Donoghue's plates, tiles and vessels represent convergences of their own: convergence of cultures as well as a convergence of patterns and colors.

"I've always been interested in decorating surfaces," said Donoghue, who earned his master of fine arts degree from the academy in 1979.

The large pieces in the show have a festive air, with their bright colors and bold designs of lines and curves that seem to be dancing across the surface. Some of the markings are indented in the surface, while others are raised. They could be symbols from

See CRANBROOK, 4E



STEPHEN CASSELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Vibrant vessel: This vase by John Donoghue, with its variety of colors and patterns, is one of the works featured in "Cranbrook Convergence."

Arboret features various happenings in the suburban arts world. Send news leads to: Creative Living, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 6205 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009, or fax them by calling 644-1314.

POTTERS MARKET

The largest pottery sale in the country, the 18th annual Oakland Community College Pottery Market, will take place Friday-Sunday, Dec. 3-5, at the Rubiner Food and Commercial Workers Hall, 876 Horace Brown Drive in Madison Heights. The address is two blocks south of 13 Mile between Stephenson Highway and John R. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call 544-4974.

Art Beat

The market is an integral part of the college's ceramic technology program. It teaches students how to design, make and market items.

CERAMICS

The ceramic students of the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus will have a ceramics show and sale 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday-Friday, Dec. 2-3, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3, at Orchard Mall, Maple and Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield. A raffle prize of a ceramic piece by noted raku artist Robert Piepenberg will be awarded.

ASSOCIATION FOUNDED

The Michigan Association of Artists has been formed, bringing together nine well-known artist organizations to present an annual artists exhibition. The first exhibit is planned for Sept. 30 through Oct. 4, 1994, at the Southfield Civic Center Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen. The annual event will offer the opportunity to discover talented Michigan artists as well as the organizations they represent. The shows have been carefully planned to offer the public the chance to meet the artists and by original art work.

The MAA consists of the Farmington Artists Club, the Southfield Civic Center Gallery, the South Oakland Art Association, the Palette and Brush Club, the Pontiac/Oakland Society of Artists, the Scarab Club, Waterford Friends of the Arts, Dearborn Arts and Crafts and the Livonia Art Club.