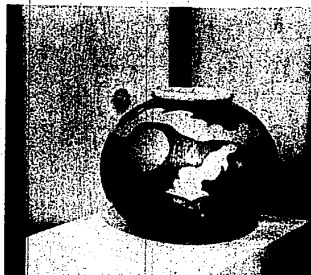




The youngsters work tent at the fair



One of the most unusual displays



Walpurgis-night in ceramics



An ordered array of elegant porcelains



New things included wrought ironware



Carolyn Hall (left) gathering material for a new soft sculpture book

Photos by Patricia Beach Smith

Street fair—too much of a once-good thing

By PATRICIA BEACH SMITH
You can no longer "do" the Ann Arbor Street Fair in one day. It used to be that you could take off on Thursday afternoon and see the whole thing that afternoon and evening.

The energy crisis has little to do with this dilemma. The number of artists has a great deal to do with it.

EVER SINCE the Street Fair began 22 years ago, it has been growing, but this is getting ridiculous.

Unfortunately, the thrust of the Street Fair, sponsored by the Ann Arbor Art Association, the South University Businessman's Association, the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce and the University of Michigan, is being diluted by the tap-alongs like the Free Fair which only add confusion and a lot of unjuried and insignificant art.

The Street Fair featured about 350 artists July 17 through 20. That was enough actually for any self-respecting art fair buff to see.

ADDED TO THE MELANGE were at least an equal number of assorted artists (and the term must be used loosely in some cases) who were taking advantage of a good established thing.

"Perhaps it would be better for it to be split into two separate fairs," suggested a Birmingham artist visiting the ring event. "I can't believe some of the garbage," said another.

Patrons were confused and it was obvious. Even so, the dollars were being spent right and left.

"I KIND OF THINK it's too big a mess nowadays," said a Cranbrook graduate.

"The entire fair is based on art as a commodity," she added.

It is no secret that artists support themselves through these kind of fairs, but it does seem a shame that the quality of everything associated with them can't be on a higher level.

It doesn't take too astute a viewer to realize that among the good wares are some of the dogs which unscrupulous artists foist

on unknowing patrons. SERIOUS ART COLLECTORS rarely frequent these events except for fun, which they even the politicians got into the act (an act that revolts.)

The fair is no longer the simple art-oriented event. It is a foot-fest and song-fest on some corners and even the politicians got into the act (an act that revolts.)

Hopefully the institution of a winter fair—which is on the docket for this next season will be the beginning of an old trend toward quality and simplicity.



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