

Artwork Heralds Agriculture At The Pennsylvania Farm Show

(Continued from Page E1)

the Appalachian Mountains.

As a result of his attention to detail, an apple orchard, Christmas tree farm, vineyard, several crops, and various animals are included. Also the lumber, maple syrup, and beekeeping industries are part of the mural's elements.

"I tried to get as many kinds of animals in that are involved in the Farm Show, but I wanted a naturalistic continuity to it — I really wanted to let it have a more natural flow," he said.

After a summer project paint-

ing a baseball mural on City Island in Harrisburg, Mason received his next assignment when architects approached him this July and asked for a sketch for the mural.

From that first sketch, and with help from Farm Show director Dennis Grumbine, the final project began to take shape. "He (Grumbine) liked the idea of centering it on the young girl and the cow, that there was an optimism, a positiveness about it, and that's what the Farm Show is all about," said Mason.

With the sketch providing a

framework, Mason went to work crisscrossing the countryside of mostly Lancaster, Lebanon, and Dauphin counties to take pictures of animals, landscape, farm buildings, and churches.

"I drove around, took pictures, and talked to people, and they would give me ideas," he said.

He began the painting process in October.

To keep the artwork to scale, since it is put over such a large surface, Mason puts black and white copies of the sketch into an overhead machine and projects the image onto the canvas. He then draws the outlines with raw sienna paint. A color copy of the sketch hangs on the canvas to serve as the template.

Even with the underlying pattern, however, the mural is not a paint-by-number effort. Mason, joined by assistants Mark Brosseau and Ryan Good, does not worry about painting carefully along the lines.

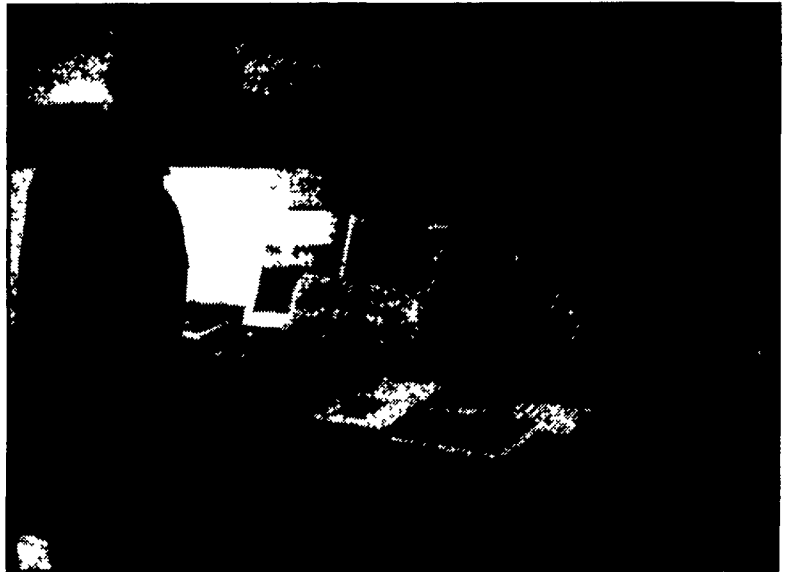
"We're trying not to be too mechanical. We want it to have a gestural, organic quality about it."

Mason used oil paint with an alkyd resin medium, a durable combination that does not need any clear coating to protect the artwork.

Each of the panels took from two to five days to complete. The 20 canvases will be glued onto 8 X 10-foot panels, which will be hung on the wall. Mason plans to use a weekend just before the show to touch up the painting. When the panels are hung together, he explained, there may be some extra painting needed to make sure the picture is seamless.

Mason grew up outside of Boston and came to Pennsylvania to study painting and printmaking at the University of Pennsylvania. Still life, sport paintings, and other murals are also a part of his repertoire; however landscapes have been an emphasis.

He has exhibited his work at the Gross McCleaf Gallery, Philadelphia, for 20 years. Mason's next exhibition will be at Dartmouth, followed by a landscape exhibition at the Gross McCleaf Gallery.



Above Mason is a sketch that served as the template for the final work that will hang in the Pennsylvania Farm Show building. He referenced the pictures on the desk for the mural. "I drove around, took pictures, and talked to people, and they would give me ideas," he said.



These concrete mirror images on the left and right sides of the mural, animals patterned after designs on the original Farm Show building.



Brosseau gets color on his brush.



Assistant Mark Brosseau looks off of the color copy of the sketch to fill in the outlines on the canvas.

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