

Festival sculptor, jeweler, scrimshander tell of arts

By BARBARA COIT
Collegian Arts Writer

What do Marvin Cohen, Jorge and Graciela Adeler and Gert Olsen have in common? They are all artists here for the 10th annual Arts Festival. They have more than this simple fact in common: they are also survivors.

The artist's world is not an easy one. Peering eyes are always ready to pass judgment. That is a risk all artists take. But this week, passing judgment was directly related to passing bucks.

For Gert Olsen, a wood sculptor, the bucks passed by. Olsen said he thought that although people were supportive of his work, they were not prepared to buy.

Olsen, a Dane, has been sculpting wood for 20 years. Before he took up sculpting, Olsen was a cabinet and cathedral furniture maker.

He now lives in Park Forest, near Chicago. For a time, he was cabinet-making and sculpting, but kept at the latter because "sculpting allows me to do what I like to do, when I like to do it. This way you are your own boss."

Olsen uses mostly mahogany for his work because the pieces are more perfect and less troublesome than other types of wood.

Olsen prefers abstracts because there are fewer restrictions. "With abstracts you can go anywhere," Olsen said. "With anatomies and birds you've got to keep it real." Olsen said his favorite piece is an abstract, about three feet tall — "It isn't meant to represent anything, I just feel good about it."

Olsen said he was not particularly pleased with the festival because there were too many different arts and crafts exhibited. People, he said, were mostly just looking

and were not willing to part with the \$40 and up that his items cost.

As for the time it takes to create a piece, Olsen said, "the time element is totally unimportant." One piece may take months to complete or it may be finished in half that time, he said. Olsen said he may work on 25 or 30 pieces at once, so fixing a time element is absurd.

Olsen said this was the first year he has been to the festival and "probably my last." He said he prefers galleries and small shows to exhibit his work. "Art and craft festivals," he said, "are no place for me to be. I'm not a flea market, nor a gypsy peddler."

For Marvin Cohen, scrimshaw is a 40-hour-a-week hobby. He is a full-time physicist for the government, at least during the day and a scrimshander the rest of the time. He and his wife Hilde

live in Rockville, Md., where they have a combined studio and home.

Scrimshaw is the old whaler's art of etching intricate pictures on ivory. The art began when whalers, who were often at sea for three years at a time, began to draw on the teeth of the whales for a much-needed diversion, particularly since many of them could neither read nor write.

Cohen said scrimshaw is an American art. Cohen, himself a sailor, said he became interested in scrimshaw because of its history and connection with the sea.

Cohen has about 400 pounds of whale ivory that he purchased nine years ago when he began to take up scrimshaw in earnest. At the moment though, he cannot sell any of the whale pieces in Pennsylvania because he is forbidden by law to sell them across state lines. Cohen said he is optimistic that in the future the law will change.

To begin a scrimshaw piece, the ivory must be cut and polished so there are no imperfections on the surface. He uses walrus and elephant ivory, at least for the items he sells beyond Maryland.

After the polishing is complete, Cohen sketches the design with a sharp diamond or tungsten scribe. India ink is applied next and then removed so that the sketch is visible. After the ink dries in the etching, a heavier sketch is made over the first. The work is intricate and can

portray any subject.

As I sat talking with Cohen, he was making a pendant for a customer. He began with the polished piece of ivory and then sketched a butterfly on it, applying and removing ink whenever necessary. He worked on the piece for about 45 minutes, and when it was completed, the intricacies were incredible.

Cohen and his wife plan to open a shop in Rockville, and if in six months time the business is good, Cohen will attend to scrimshaw full-time and forego physics.

Jorge and Graciela Adeler design and make all the jewelry they sell. The designs come easy, Jorge said, because he and his family know a variety of techniques and schools of design. This enables them to incorporate easily one or all of them into the same piece.

The Adeler family, nine in all, are from Argentina but for the past two years have lived in the United States.

Jorge's specialty is acrylics, while his father's is brass. Many of the pendants and other pieces they sell are a combination of both brass and acrylic. Jorge said that while each adult has a particular specialty, each is capable of producing an entire piece himself.

The materials used for their jewelry are almost always the same; acrylic, brass, ceramics, leather and stone. The stones are imported from Argentina but everything else is bought here.

Jorge said it took the family



Photo by Richard Blum
Jorge Adeler, originally from Argentina and now Virginia, describes a piece of jewelry made by his family to a potential customer. More than 400 artists came to State College to exhibit and sell their work for the Festival of Arts.

Band plays tight tribute

By GEORGE OSGOOD
Collegian Staff Writer

The cardboard music stands were the only shoddy part of the Dance Band performance last night in front of Old Main.

The rest of the concert was first-rate, an engaging blend of swing and jazz tunes that had an Arts Festival audience of about 2,000 tapping their feet for two hours.

The 21-man band was tight and obviously well-rehearsed as they played through a chronological tribute to the big bands of the 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's. Although music of this type may be somewhat alien to the bulk of Penn State students, last night's concert visibly appealed to many of them and even prompted outright cheering from some.

There were virtually no flat spots in the performance as it moved smoothly from Cole Porter, Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman and Glenn Miller through Billy May, Ray Anthony, Les Brown, Stan Kenton and the Count Basie tunes of more recent vintage. The band played old standards like "Begin the Beguine," "Woodchoppers' Ball," "Moonlight Serenade" and "In the Mood" and such not-so-famous pieces as "Lean Baby," "Easy Cookin'" and "Theme and Variations." All were expertly done and all were well received by an audience of all age groups.

The high point of the concert was a rendition of "Yardbird Suite," a Charlie "Bird" Parker tune that featured Gene Borza on trumpet, Jim Eminger on saxophone and vocals by the program's guest artist, Bobby

Dorough, a continuing force in American Jazz and an outstanding pianist and singer. The "Yardbird Suite" melody was written by Parker and the lyrics were added by Dorough shortly after "Bird's" death, as a tribute to a consummate musician and great artist.

The program began with "The Queen Bee" and "Take the 'A' Train" and moved on to the Cole Porter standard "Begin the Beguine" in swing time, aided by a fine clarinet solo by Joe Allesandro, a Penn State education professor. Woody Herman's "Woodchoppers' Ball" and a Tommy Dorsey arrangement of "Song of India" by Rimsky-Korsokoff followed, leading to a tight rendition of Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade," a reflection of the romantic mood of the big band era.

Background information and several anecdotal asides were provided by Borza, the band's leader and premier trumpeter. Borza put each song into historical perspective and explained the various musical forces that spurred the creation of each tune and particular arrangement.

Donald Keat, associate professor of education at the University, and, in Borza's words, "a virtuoso saxophonist" gave an outstanding performance of "Two Moods for Baritone," a recently written piece prepared for Stan Kenton's band. His swing-jazz saxophone lead was beautifully done — flawless, in fact, except for a rude interruption by Old Main's chimes.

a while before they could understand what American customers wanted. Adjustments are made from show to show and their wide variety of pieces gives them protection and has assured their survival. "When you have to survive from your art, you have to adjust to the demand and the customer," Jorge said.

The family now lives in Reston, Va. Jorge said he likes the area because nearby Washington D.C. is international in flavor and has a good market for the jewelry they make.

East College Avenue

seemed like a pretty good area for the Adelers, too; if anyone asked them about the pieces displayed, either Jorge or Graciela gave them the background on the piece. "I don't like super market service," Jorge said. "I like to tell them something about the work, who made it."

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