

Arts Festival: Portraits of three artists . . .

By LAURA SHEMICK
Collegian Staff Writer

Stones shimmer, sparkle and capture the deep vibrant green of summer grass. The gold shines, the tiger's eye winks and the jade evokes visions of Oriental luxury.

It's a jeweler's stand across from Carnegie Building. The man and woman who run it are Stanley and Barbara Wolk.

In the back of the stand, Barbara deftly twists 12-karat gold wire into a ring, twists a few loops around the top and drops the new ring into the display in front of the stand. Her husband is telling potential customers about the mineral malachite.

"Malachite is moving into its place again in the jewelry scene," he says. "Most of it's coming from Zaire, but it's junk."

The Wolks sell malachite, opal, chrysocolla, rhodite and jade, vericite, tiger's eye, lapis lazuli and picture stone. They began the jewelry business five years ago when they were rockhounds with too many gemstones to handle.

"We were rockhounds to begin with," says Barbara, "and then we had all this cut stone we had bought. We'd been going to a lot of craft fairs, and one day we decided to do gold jewelry — silver was too popular."

The Wolks work out of Tacoma Park, Maryland and have been doing shows for four years. They visited the Arts Festival last year and say they enjoy the festivals very much.

"Travelling's the best part of this business," says Barbara. "But the hardest part is the preparation," adds her husband.

The two say they pick designs from design books, then sketch their choices and work from the sketches. It takes about two or three hours to make a pendant, Barbara says, but cutting and polishing the stones takes longer.

"First, we buy the stones, then we slice them with a jeweler's saw," Barbara says. "We grind them on a diamond wheel, then go to a leather wheel with diamond powder on it to make it smooth. Stan does about ten at a time and it takes him a day."

Stan says wire jewelry goes back to the Italian Renaissance but Americans tend to prefer heavy cast jewelry.

The Wolks do a lot of shows in Pennsylvania and New York, but hope to go farther afield.

"I hope we can eventually hit the whole United States," Barbara says.

The Allen Street enameler says he was "kind of pushed" into his craft, since his wife was the one who originally bought the kiln and the other materials he uses in enameling.

His wife gave up the art so he had to use the stuff.



Putting a broom together, Ralph Gates of Asheville, N. Carolina grins at a photographer. He has been making brooms for four years.

Photos by Patrick Little

Thomas G. Gregory hails from Danville, Pa. He makes enamel-covered dishes, ashtrays, beads, pendants and earrings. He says the craft fascinates him.

"There are so many ways to put enamel on copper," he says. "There are so many different processes. For beads, I use a torch; for dishes I use the kiln. There's stenciling, swirling, tarpuling and overlays . . ."

He says it's not a hobby, "that comes out of a kit" but a craft. Enameling isn't a full-time job for him, either. Church

work and other activities also take up his time, he says.

Gregory says he has no secrets about his craft.

"I feel if someone wants to get some information, I should give it to him," he says. "What do I live for if I don't share my craft? Giving is living, that's my motto."

"Maybe I can help someone to be a better enamelist if I tell how I do things," he says.

He took a fine mesh sifter and tapped

some powdered enamel (glass) into it. He took an already enameled dish, sprayed it with "gum" to make the enamel stick, and tapped the enamel from the sifter onto the dish. He sprayed it again, put it on a three-pronged stand and pushed it into the little 1,900-degree kiln on the table beside him.

"It has to stay there for five minutes," he says, "because with the wind here, it's cooler than it is at home."

After five minutes, he pulls it out. When it cools, it changes color — green to blue, black to a pattern of horsetails he had painted on earlier with liquid enamel.

He looks at it with satisfaction and sets it down to cool.

"That'll be about \$7.50 when I sell it," he says. He goes back to another piece, polishing off the edges before he puts it on the table to be sold.

What makes a broom maker make brooms?

"Fun and profit," says Ralph Gates, the broom maker on the Allen Street mall.

He says he's been making brooms for four years. He learned the art from a man in Tennessee after he quit being a systems engineer at Cape Kennedy after the Apollo projects were done.

"People who like to make brooms are those who like to be their own bosses, like to work with their hands, and like the self-satisfaction that comes with it," Gates says.

He buys the string and corn tassels he uses to make the brooms but finds the handles himself in the woods, near his Asheville, N. Carolina home.

The handles are gnarled, heavy chunks of wood, twisted by the honeysuckle which grows around them in the wild. Some are three feet long and two inches thick, some are three-quarters of an inch thick and a foot long. Some are made of hickory, others oak or other woods.

"Half the fun is looking for the wood," Gates says. He goes into the woods in the winter months and collects 30-40 handles a day. The wood is hung to dry and seasoned for three months to a year.

Once the broom tassels, string and handles are all together, Gates says he can make six dozen brooms a week. It takes him about half an hour to make one, but a novice takes up to two hours.

Gates trains two apprentices a year to add to the 15 hand broom makers in the United States at present. Most people don't use his brooms, Gates says — they hang them up as decorations.

"I'll tell you how I know that," he says. "I put a little card in each broom that says I'll replace the broom straw if it wears out — because it's the handle they're paying for, not the straw. But not one person has asked me to replace the straw yet, and that's how I know that they're not being used."



Photo by Diana Younken

Tom McKinney, who says his work is "too often" compared to Norman Rockwell's, relaxes in front of one of his paintings. He is one of about 400 artists with work on display for the 11th Annual Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts.

Traveling painter's work tells stories

By LYNNE MARGOLIS
and DIANA YOUNKEN
Collegian Staff Writers

After only one day, it's clear that this year's Arts Festival is graced by a quality and sophistication unmatched in previous years.

A prime example is the work of one artist, Tom McKinney of Hatboro, Pa., near Philadelphia. He was asked to return to State College after a successful exhibit in the HUB last March.

McKinney's portraits, mostly of black persons, have been compared "too often" to those of illustrator Norman Rockwell, he said, and it's true their styles are similar. In a more important sense, however, McKinney treats his subjects with the same low-key reality that has made Rockwell's portraits of American life famous.

Most of his ideas are inspired during his travels, McKinney said. Candid photographs of the people he observes later serve as subjects for his portraits. Through his medium, opaque watercolor, he adapts these ideas into a composition which tells a story, he said.

McKinney said he limits himself to three outdoor shows a year because he prefers private showings and gallery exhibits. "Traveling is fun but it gets to be kind of a drag after a

while." It has, however, earned him recognition, he said.

In fact, his work may soon become internationally known. McKinney has been commissioned to design and illustrate a poster of the Beatles, which, if accepted, will soon be distributed worldwide.

He also has been asked by Columbia Records to do album illustrations.

His work is widely recognized throughout Philadelphia, where he maintains a studio. Although most of his portraits seem rather expensive, his customers have never questioned the price of his works, McKinney said.

Impressions

He cites the steady increase of his sales over the four years as proof. "I wouldn't have those prices on there if I couldn't sell them," he claimed.

A disciplined artist, McKinney begins work about 7 a.m. every day and doesn't stop painting until 8 or 9 p.m. He usually completes at least one painting each day, he said, even though most of his deadlines are self-imposed.

McKinney, 37, worked as an illustrator for General Motors and Boeing Airlines until 1968, when he decided to free-lance for a living.

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