

Tempo Du Pag

on 18

Chicago Tribune Sunday, December 3, 1989

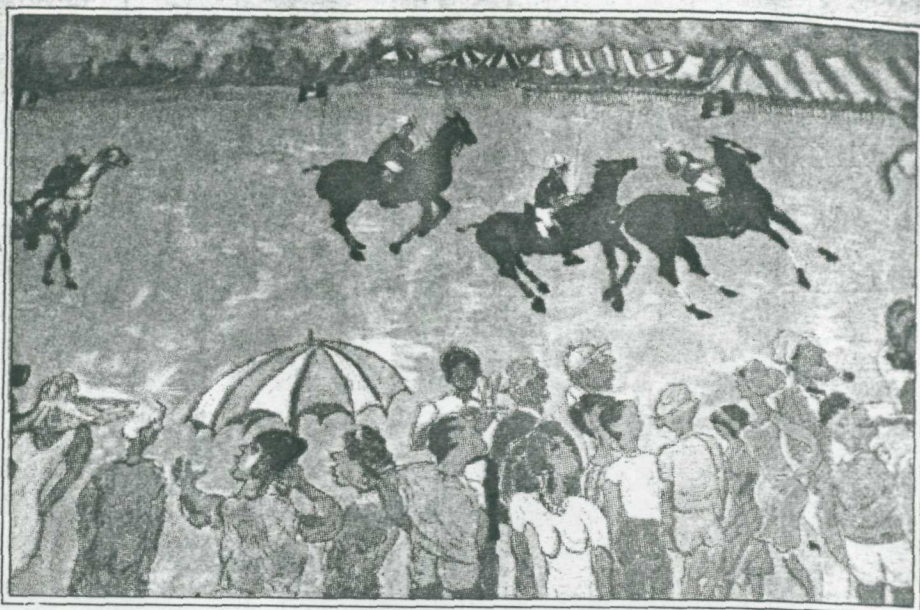


Photo courtesy of Eleanor King Hookham
A section of Eleanor King Hookham's Oak Brook Polo Club mural.

El King

When the Muse whispers, the art proves Eleanor King Hookham listens

By Deborah Starr Seibel
Photo by Michael Budrys

Step into the world of Eleanor King Hookham, and you can, quite literally, stumble upon a little of what it means to be an artist. The oil paintings, watercolors and signature ink-and-coffee drawings are everywhere, in the hallways, propped against living room furniture, stacked 20 deep in the dining room. Only after taking in the astonishing array of work on the floor do you realize with some surprise that a few treasured pieces are masterfully framed and hanging neatly on the walls.

The artist herself, surrounded by what she loves, is unapologetic.

"I want to show you my work," she says enthusiastically, impatiently sorting through a massive stack of watercolors near the fireplace.

Your first impressions are of bold,

dramatic color executed with a passion almost spilling out of the large canvases. Movement and light are captured in all their variations, from the crashing waves in an ocean storm to tender flowers caught dripping with early morning dew. Then, in stark contrast, you notice the precision and discipline of the oil portraits, the proud faces quietly daring you to try to overlook them.

This is the world of El King, as she calls herself professionally, an 80-year-old creative firebrand who lives simply, almost incongruously, on a quiet street in Elmhurst. You'd never guess driving up to the simple, charming house that anything unusual is going on inside.

Until she opens the door.

While the hazel eyes flash a warm, hospitable welcome, you try not to bump into various piles of what turns out to be just a small part of her legacy. There's more, she tells you, in the garage, upstairs, in the basement, in the homes of various collectors and gracing



the walls of some of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world.

Somehow you know before she tells you that she always wanted to be an artist.

"I started drawing when I was six," she says, using puppies and other children from her Oklahoma City neighborhood as her first subjects. "I remember when I was in fourth grade, the teacher asked everyone, 'What do you want to be?' I said, 'A great artist,' and everybody laughed."

But not he of beauty, it's

"Many more wake me up have to get up have to paint fade."

"My father artistic talent, thing with it," did do, how daughter's um at the age of

mpoDuPage

Chicago Tribune Sunday, December 3, 1989



the walls of some of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world.

Somehow you know before she tells you that she always wanted to be an artist.

“I started drawing when I was six,” she says, using puppies and other children from her Oklahoma City neighborhood as her first subjects. “I remember when I was in fourth grade, the teacher asked everyone, ‘What do you want to be?’ I said, ‘A great artist,’ and everybody laughed.”

But not her family. Talent and love of beauty, it seems, is in the genes.

“Many mornings, my mother would wake me up and say, ‘Eleanor, you have to get up and see the sunrise. You have to paint these flowers before they fade.’”

“My father’s side of the family had artistic talent, but they never did anything with it,” she says. What her father did do, however, was recognize his daughter’s unusual talent and take her, at the age of 14, to meet with a college

art professor. The teacher accepted her immediately for what turned out to be her only year of professional training. “It was the Depression and we didn’t have money,” she says simply.

Through those early years of struggle, of trial and error, she continued learning her craft by teaching herself.

“I had to learn from books,” she says without a note of regret. But that one

See El King, pg. 11

El King

Continued from page 1

critical year of formal training had introduced her not only to artistic perspective, composition and color but also to the notion of presenting her work to the New York art world where she dreamed of an exhibit.

While still in her early twenties, Hookham took a Greyhound bus to New York City, walking from gallery to gallery with samples of her best work. With no takers, fast running out of money and facing the prospect of going home disappointed, she met the one person who thought she deserved a chance.

"His name was Leonard Clayton and he owned a gallery on 57th Street," she says. "He took one look at my pieces and decided to put them in his window. It was such a thrill."

Two years later, New York's Montross Gallery honored her with her first one-woman show. And the icing on that already-rich cake was glowing reviews from the New York newspapers, including the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune.

After returning home, which by this time was Pensacola, Fla., she met and married Oak Park native Robert Hookham, a Navy commander, structural engineer and architect. She put aside her career for roughly two decades to raise their three children. But the powerful urge to create new works remained unabated.

"The muse isn't far behind me," she says matter-of-factly. "I don't have to wait for inspiration."

The flowers and seascapes of Pensacola, captured in hundreds of dramatic watercolors, serve as a reminder of those happy years on the Gulf Coast. After the family moved to Elmhurst in the 1940s and her children were grown, she distinctly remembers making the somewhat difficult transition back into the professional world:

"I woke up one morning and I was 50 years old. I said, 'I have to get back into the big swim of art.'"

Swim she did, financing her re-entry by teaching art in her basement workshop. At one point, she had more than 150 Du Page area students a week. Lena Lagergren of Elmhurst was one of them.

"She was a very fine teacher," said Lagergren, "and so very charming. She encouraged her pupils and they all adored her. She had wonderful patience."

In the meantime, Hookham's own work was flourishing. She was exhibited at the Johnson Gallery of Chicago and New York's Galerie International, followed quickly by some two dozen one-woman shows in Paris.

It is in France that she has been most widely recognized, receiving numerous honors and medals, including the 1975 Grand Prix Humanitaire de France and the 1981 Medaille Vermeil (eclipsed that year only by the Gold Medals won by Dr. Albert Schweitzer and Jacques Cousteau) for her art and color theory. Some of her work is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris and the Centre d'Art George Pompidou.

But it was in her Elmhurst kitchen that she came up with her signature technique: ink-and-coffee drawings.

"One day the phone rang in the kitchen," she says, "and, moving to answer it, I spilled coffee on one of my drawings. But I liked it so well that I kept on using it."

A prime example of this unique method is on display at the Elmhurst Art Museum, now occupying two rooms of the Joanne B. Wagner Community Center. "The News," drawn by El King in 1979, is an intricate meshing of scenes from the day's headlines, surrounded by a dense, chaotic border of



Photo courtesy of Eleanor King Hookham

When Eleanor King Hookham's creativity starts to flow, not all the paint ends up on the canvas.

lion.

For an internationally recognized artist with 26 one-woman shows in Paris and 28 international honorary medals to her credit, Hookham seems curiously without ego. On a tour of the Elmhurst Art Museum, she quickly passes over her own work, encouraging the visitor to discover the work of others.

According to assistant curator Willard Knutson, who helps keep track of the 200-plus collection, Hookham has the quality of generosity: "We all like to blow our own horns, but she is definitely promoting other artists and the art museum. She's been dedicated to it for years."

But even the walls of a permanent museum couldn't begin to contain or restrict Hookham's delight in bringing art to the community, whatever the location. This one-woman ambassador of art appreciation devoted an entire summer two years ago to painting a huge mural for the Oak Brook Polo Club. Forty feet long and eight feet wide, the mural is brilliantly colored and depicts the style and drama of various polo scenes.

"I worked in the garage," says Hookham, recalling the challenge. "You remember how hot that summer was? Well, I'd get up and paint from five in the morning until nine, and then from five until nine in the evening. The neighbors would come over and watch; so I put them in the mural as spectators."

Hookham was thrilled with the mural's impact: "Michael Butler said to me, 'You caught the spirit; the horses look as if they're having as much fun as the riders!'" Unfortunately, whipped around after its unveiling by the wind and the rain, the mural couldn't stay in the members' tent long. It now hangs in the Oak Brook Hills Hotel, appropriately in the area leading to Chukkers Lounge. Butler, who commissioned the mural, calls it a "lovely, original work" done by "a lovely lady. I don't know of any [polo] club that has something as nice as this."

Meanwhile, for Hookham, the work continues. It has provided enough overflow inspiration to turn one daughter, Tarrant, into an accomplished sculptress and the other, Jane, into the owner of a

at my pieces and decided to put them in his window. It was such a thrill."

Two years later, New York's Montross Gallery honored her with her first one-woman show. And the icing on that already-rich cake was glowing reviews from the New York newspapers, including the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune.

After returning home, which by this time was Pensacola, Fla., she met and married Oak Park native Robert Hookham, a Navy commander, structural engineer and architect. She put aside her career for roughly two decades to raise their three children. But the powerful urge to create new works remained unabated.

"The muse isn't far behind me," she says matter-of-factly. "I don't have to wait for inspiration."

The flowers and seascapes of Pensacola, captured in hundreds of dramatic watercolors, serve as a reminder of those happy years on the Gulf Coast. After the family moved to Elmhurst in the 1940s and her children were grown, she distinctly remembers making the somewhat difficult transition back into the professional world:

"I woke up one morning and I was 50 years old. I said, 'I have to get back into the big swim of art.'"

Swim she did, financing her re-entry by teaching art in her basement workshop. At one point, she had more than 150 Du Page area students a week. Lena Lagergren of Elmhurst was one of them.

"She was a very fine teacher," said Lagergren, "and so very charming. She encouraged her pupils and they all adored her. She had wonderful patience."

In the meantime, Hookham's own work was flourishing. She was exhibited at the Johnson Gallery of Chicago and New York's Galerie International, followed quickly by some two dozen one-woman shows in Paris.

It is in France that she has been most widely recognized, receiving numerous honors and medals, including the 1975 Grand Prix Humanitaire de France and the 1981 Medaille Vermeil (eclipsed that year only by the Gold Medals won by Dr. Albert Schweitzer and Jacques Cousteau) for her art and color theory. Some of her work is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris and the Centre d'Art George Pompidou.

But it was in her Elmhurst kitchen that she came up with her signature technique: ink-and-coffee drawings.

"One day the phone rang in the kitchen," she says, "and, moving to answer it, I spilled coffee on one of my drawings. But I liked it so well that I kept on using it."

A prime example of this unique method is on display at the Elmhurst Art Museum, now occupying two rooms of the Joanne B. Wagner Community Center. "The News," drawn by El King in 1979, is an intricate meshing of scenes from the day's headlines, surrounded by what looks like pages from a newspaper.

"The children love it," said museum curator Eleanor Hickey, "because it looks like real printing but it isn't. They'll come up close and try to read it."

Such feedback brings joy to the face of Hookham, who wants to encourage all ages to discover art. She smiles upon hearing that during one month alone more than 900 Du Page County school children explored the museum, fascinated by the sculpture and paintings on display.

"One child asked, 'Are all artists dead?'" said Hickey. "With the cutbacks in school art programs, this helps fill in the gap."

It also gives the community a showcase—a launch pad, if you will—for emerging Du Page artists and a taste of what is possible if Hookham realizes her next dream: building a permanent art museum in Elmhurst. While still in the planning stages, Hookham, as president of the Elmhurst Fine Arts and Civic Center Foundation, has already acquired a piece of property and a \$100,000 grant from the state to pay for an architect. But as a child of the Depression, wary of bank loans, she doesn't want to begin building until she has the necessary estimated \$2 mil-



Photo courtesy of Eleanor King Hookham

When Eleanor King Hookham's creativity starts to flow, not all the paint ends up on the canvas.

lion.

For an internationally recognized artist with 26 one-woman shows in Paris and 28 international honorary medals to her credit, Hookham seems curiously without ego. On a tour of the Elmhurst Art Museum, she quickly passes over her own work, encouraging the visitor to discover the work of others.

According to assistant curator Willard Knutson, who helps keep track of the 200-plus collection, Hookham has the quality of generosity: "We all like to blow our own horns, but she is definitely promoting other artists and the art museum. She's been dedicated to it for years."

But even the walls of a permanent museum couldn't begin to contain or restrict Hookham's delight in bringing art to the community, whatever the location. This one-woman ambassador of art appreciation devoted an entire summer two years ago to painting a huge mural for the Oak Brook Polo Club. Forty feet long and eight feet wide, the mural is brilliantly colored and depicts the style and drama of various polo scenes.

"I worked in the garage," says Hookham, recalling the challenge. "You remember how hot that summer was? Well, I'd get up and paint from five in the morning until nine, and then from five until nine in the evening. The neighbors would come over and watch; so I put them in the mural as spectators."

Hookham was thrilled with the mural's impact: "Michael Butler said to me, 'You caught the spirit; the horses look as if they're having as much fun as the riders!'" Unfortunately, whipped around after its unveiling by the wind and the rain, the mural couldn't stay in the members' tent long. It now hangs in the Oak Brook Hills Hotel, appropriately in the area leading to Chukkers Lounge. Butler, who commissioned the mural, calls it a "lovely, original work" done by "a lovely lady. I don't know of any [polo] club that has something as nice as this."

Meanwhile, for Hookham, the work continues. It has provided enough overflow inspiration to turn one daughter, Tarrant, into an accomplished sculptress and the other, Jane, into the owner of one art magazine and the editor of another. The total concentration on her canvas has also served to soothe her after the death of her son eight years ago and is providing more needed solace after the very recent death of her husband.

"Wherever I go, I'm always studying forms and colors, the way the light hits a tree," she says. When she "gets a streak on," she still gets up at five to paint, not with any set idea but rather with just a feeling. "I want to paint to prove that I have done the best I could with my talent, to experience what is deep in me, without any thought of sales."

Hookham says she never expects to become wealthy from her art. The profits from the dozen-odd paintings she sells every year are plowed back into working materials, her canvases and expensive paints. She wants for nothing more, she says.

And so, with the memory of her husband's constant support and encouragement, she will continue to listen to the Muse, to paint with joy and to work with patience and determination toward the building of the museum. It is the wealth of her talent that she shares with the world.

"I can't leave, I can't get sick and I can't die," she says. Of course not. She has too much left to do.

Chair & Ottoman
Recliner



Recliners
from



Hours

Mon, Tues,
Thurs, Fri: 10:00 - 9:00
Wed: 10:00 - 6:00
Saturday: 10:00 - 6:00
Sunday: 12:30 - 5:00

Little Ms. Marek, Young Girl



Treasures From The Heart

Located on St.
Convenient A

Asbury's, Jewelry • Bear Feelings • 5th Avenue Cleaners • Fifth Avenue Coffees • Hutch 22, Gourmet Cookware

PEOPLE

80-year-old artist works on a dream

She wants to build a museum

by Lynn Rogers

One step inside Eleanor King Hookham's Elmhurst home, a visitor can sense an artistic presence. It is difficult to miss.

There are literally hundreds of paintings strewn about the living room and front hall, often making it difficult to walk. Vivid watercolors are stacked against the wall, with ink drawings dotting the furniture and floors.

A formidable oil portrait hangs by the staircase; the intense blue eyes of the model lock an onlooker's gaze. Sculptures, flowers and plaques adorn whatever space is left.

"As you can see," the 80-year-old Hookham says, "I'm an artist."

Hookham, who paints as "El King," recently returned from Paris, where she had her 26th one-woman show. Her awards and honors, as well as her artwork, are voluminous.

While in France, Hookham received the Goya medal and a Veimeil from Arts, Science and Letter of France. "I have five or six people in Paris who love to promote me," the artist said.

France is, in fact, the country where she has been most widely recognized. Her watercolor triptych, "The Emerald Wave," hangs in the City Hall of Paris as part of the permanent municipal collection of the Modern Museum of Art. Hookham painted the 15-foot piece in 1983.

In 1968, she received a silver metal from Encouragement au Progres for her color theory and art,

Fine Arts and Civic Center Foundation and the Elmhurst Art Museum, and holds an honorary doctorate of the arts from Elmhurst College.

A permanent art museum in Elmhurst has been a staunch cause for Hookham, who speaks of it with determination. For over 40 years, she has tried to build her dream and recently received a \$100,000 grant from the state to pay for an architect. She said they have acquired a piece of land in Elmhurst, but need to raise nearly \$2 million for the project.

"It'll be fun," she said, adding, "But I didn't start all of this to fill it with my own work." Some of the museum's art is temporarily displayed in the Joanne Wagner Community Center in Elmhurst, where over 900 schoolchildren visited it in one month.

Hookham understands the impact of art on children. She said she became interested in painting at the age of six, when she sketched "everyone in the neighborhood." By 10, she had her first easel.

"I was born with it, I guess," she said, adding her mother had a great influence on her. "She told us to never give up on anything. That's one reason I still plug away on the art museum."

Her only year of formal training came under Oklahoma City College teacher Martha Avey, when Hookham was only 14. "She inspired me, she taught me perspective, composition and color," Hookham said.

Avey also told her young prodigy about the New York art world, where Hookham eventually exhibited at the Montross Gallery and critics



Eleanor King Hookham, a longtime area art teacher and in watercolor she has just begun in her wonderfully cluttered Elm

area youngsters. She said her basement workshop was always filled; at one point she had 150 students a week.

"I tried to make it fun," she said, adding "I think they said 'If Mrs. Hookham can do it, so can I,' " she said.

Today, Hookham remains active, painting from four to five hours a day. She recently completed a 40-by-8-foot mural for the Oak Brook Polo Club, which now hangs in the Oak Brook Hills hotel.

The painting is one of the largest she has ever done, she said. Hookham said she enjoys all types of art, but is most well known for her watercolor flowers and sea scenes. "I love to paint flowers because I used to live in Pensacola, Florida."

Hookham occasionally dabbles in modern art and indeed some striking pieces crop up in her selection, but said her gallery does not encourage it. "They don't want me to go too modern. They say 'You have a light that shines through in your work



and Letter of France. "I have five or six people in Paris who love to promote me," the artist said.

France is, in fact, the country where she has been most widely recognized. Her watercolor triptych, "The Emerald Wave," hangs in the City Hall of Paris as part of the permanent municipal collection of the Modern Museum of Art. Hookham painted the 15-foot piece in 1983.

In 1968, she received a silver metal from Encouragement au Progres for her color theory and art, second only to Jacques Cousteau and Dr. Albert Schweitzer's gold. The list continues — the Grand Prix Humanitaire De France in 1975, the Medaille Veimeil in 1981, and the prestigious Grand Prix Humanitaire De France gold metal in 1984.

Her paintings are currently exhibited at the well-known Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, after hanging 22 years in the Galerie Marcel Bernheim.

How has she handled all this success? "I'd get big-headed if I was so inclined," she said, laughing.

In addition to her French honors, Hookham has also been awarded 28 medals for her work in other countries. "All those medals," she said, pointing to a display Olympians would be jealous of, "And I haven't been to most of these countries — only my work."

Locally, she has devoted more time to promoting art appreciation than her own pieces. She is the founder of the Elmhurst Artists' Guild, where she served three years as president. She is now president of the Elmhurst

guess, she said, adding her mother had a great influence on her. "She told us to never give up on anything. That's one reason I still plug away on the art museum."

Her only year of formal training came under Oklahoma City College teacher Martha Avey, when Hookham was only 14. "She inspired me, she taught me perspective, composition and color," Hookham said.

Avey also told her young prodigy about the New York art world, where Hookham eventually exhibited at the Montross Gallery and critics praised her work. After she met her husband, Commander Robert Hookham, she settled down and focused her energy on raising her three children.

By age 50, she felt it was time to go back "into the mainstream." She had a show in Chicago's Johnson Gallery and New York's Galerie International and was soon offered an opportunity in Paris. "It proves nothing is ever lost," she said.

By then, her creativity spilled over into her children. Her daughter Tarrant is now an accomplished sculptress in Rochester, whose work appears in Hookham's living room gallery. Her other daughter, Jane Blake, owns one art magazine and edits another.

Hookham's only son died a few years ago, an experience that still brings tears to her eyes. Before his death, he was a writer of children's books and had a rising career in real estate. "No matter how many honors I get, it's hard to lose a son," she said.

Besides her own children, Hookham also taught many

Oak Brook Hills hotel.

The painting is one of the largest she has ever done, she said. Hookham said she enjoys all types of art, but is most well known for her watercolor flowers and sea scenes. "I love to paint flowers because I used to live in Pensacola, Florida."

Hookham occasionally dabbles in modern art and indeed some striking pieces crop up in her selection, but said her gallery does not encourage it. "They don't want me to go too modern. They say 'You have a light that shines through in your work — don't change it.'"

She said she is happy with her art, but it is difficult to paint and promote at the same time. She said she is not yet rich. "If you suddenly get 'discovered,' you get skyrocketed," she said. "I haven't searched for anything like that, but it may happen yet."

In the eyes of many in DuPage County, Hookham already is a star. "She's a charming lady and an outstanding community person," said close friend Mary Ann Madison, who is the co-vice president of the Elmhurst Artists' Guild. "She's had a goal all her life to build the museum not for herself, but the community...to build cultural arts."

For all of Hookham's own cultural art, her most treasured piece is a triptych of her mother in her garden. She said the painting is a moving one, with the outline of her mother's bones showing through her work shirt.

"Age is planting new life," the artist said simply. If so, Eleanor King Hookham has a vast and blooming garden.



She may be 80, but her chats in her Elmhurst li



AIR C
(Most Ins
ONLY \$

Carrier "W un

For All Your Heating

HEATING
AMALIN
AIR

RESIDENTIAL C

VILLA PARK
833-4000

PEOPLE

Artist dream a museum

Fine Arts and Civic Center Foundation and the Elmhurst Art Museum, and holds an honorary doctorate of the arts from Elmhurst College.

A permanent art museum in Elmhurst has been a staunch cause for Hookham, who speaks of it with determination. For over 40 years, she has tried to build her dream and recently received a \$100,000 grant from the state to pay for an architect. She said they have acquired a piece of land in Elmhurst, but need to raise nearly \$2 million for the project.

"It'll be fun," she said, adding, "But I didn't start all of this to fill it with my own work." Some of the museum's art is temporarily displayed in the Joanne Wagner Community Center in Elmhurst, where over 900 schoolchildren visited it in one month.

Hookham understands the impact of art on children. She said she became interested in painting at the age of six, when she sketched "everyone in the neighborhood." By 10, she had her first easel.

"I was born with it, I guess," she said, adding her mother had a great influence on her. "She told us to never give up on anything. That's one reason I still plug away on the art museum."

Her only year of formal training came under Oklahoma City College teacher Marjorie Avey, when Hookham was only 14. "She inspired me, she taught me perspective, composition and color," Hookham said.

Avey also told her young prodigy about the New York art world, where Hookham eventually exhibited at the



Eleanor King Hookham, a longtime area art teacher and internationally known painter, displays a watercolor she has just begun in her wonderfully cluttered Elmhurst basement studio.

area youngsters. She said her basement workshop was always filled; at one point she had 150 students a week.

"I tried to make it fun," she said, adding "I think they said 'If Mrs. Hookham can do it, so can I,' " she said.

Today, Hookham remains active, painting from four to five hours a day. She recently completed a 40-by-8-foot mural for the Oak Brook Polo Club, which now hangs in the Oak Brook Hills hotel.

The painting is one of the largest she has ever done, she said. Hookham said she enjoys all types of art, but is most well known for her watercolor flowers and sea scenes. "I love to paint flowers because I used to live in Pensacola, Florida."

Hookham occasionally dabbles in modern art and indeed some striking pieces crop up in her selection, but said her gallery does not encourage it. "They don't want me to go too modern. They say 'You have a light that



isplayed in the Joanne Vagner Community Center in Elmhurst, where over 900 schoolchildren visited it in one month.

Hookham understands the impact of art on children. She said she became interested in painting at the age of six, when she sketched "everyone in the neighborhood." By 10, she had her first easel.

"I was born with it, I guess," she said, adding her mother had a great influence on her. "She told us to never give up on anything. That's the reason I still plug away in the art museum."

Her only year of formal training came under Oklahoma City College teacher Martha Avey, when Hookham was only 14. "She inspired me, she taught me perspective, composition and color," Hookham said.

Avey also told her young prodigy about the New York art world, where Hookham eventually exhibited at the Montross Gallery and critics praised her work. After she met her husband, Commander Robert Hookham, she settled down and focused her energy on raising her three children.

By age 50, she felt it was time to go back "into the mainstream." She had a show in Chicago's Johnson gallery and New York's Galerie International and was soon offered an opportunity in Paris. "It proves nothing is ever lost," she said.

By then, her creativity spilled over into her children. Her daughter Tarrant is now an accomplished sculptress in Rochester, whose work appears in Hookham's living room gallery. Her other daughter, Jane Blake, owns an art magazine and edits other.

Hookham's only son died a few years ago, an experience that still brings tears to her eyes. Before his death, he was a writer of children's books and had a rising career in real estate. "No matter how many honors I get, it's hard to lose a son," she said. Besides her own children, Hookham also taught many

basement workshop was always filled; at one point she had 150 students a week.

"I tried to make it fun," she said, adding "I think they said 'If Mrs. Hookham can do it, so can I,'" she said.

Today, Hookham remains active, painting from four to five hours a day. She recently completed a 40-by-8-foot mural for the Oak Brook Polo Club, which now hangs in the Oak Brook Hills hotel.

The painting is one of the largest she has ever done, she said. Hookham said she enjoys all types of art, but is most well known for her watercolor flowers and sea scenes. "I love to paint flowers because I used to live in Pensacola, Florida."

Hookham occasionally dabbles in modern art and indeed some striking pieces crop up in her selection, but said her gallery does not encourage it. "They don't want me to go too modern. They say 'You have a light that shines, through in your work — don't change it.'"

She said she is happy with her art, but it is difficult to paint and promote at the same time. She said she is not yet rich. "If you suddenly get 'discovered,' you get skyrocketed," she said. "I haven't searched for anything like that, but it may happen yet."

In the eyes of many in DuPage County, Hookham already is a star. "She's a charming lady and an outstanding community person," said close friend Mary Ann Madison, who is the co-vice president of the Elmhurst Artists' Guild. "She's had a goal all her life to build the museum not for herself, but the community...to build cultural arts."

For all of Hookham's own cultural art, her most treasured piece is a triptych of her mother in her garden. She said the painting is a moving one, with the outline of her mother's bones showing through her work shirt.

"Age is planting new life," the artist said simply. If so, Eleanor King Hookham has a vast and blooming garden.



Bradley S. Pines photos

She may be 80, but her sparkle and love of life is evident as she chats in her Elmhurst living room.



ARE YOU BEAT BY THE HEAT?

Beat the summer prices!
Beat the heat!
Buy today and **SAVE!**

**INSTALLED 2 TON CARRIER®
AIR CONDITIONER**
(Most Installation - Seer 8+)

ONLY **\$1198⁰⁰**

Carrier

"We're not comfortable until you are."



For All Your Heating & Cooling Needs Call:

AMALING
HEATING
AIR INC.

The #1 Heating and Air Specialists in DuPage County

RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL

VILLA PARK
833-4000

NORTH AURORA
859-8800

SPECIAL Air Cond. Tune-up \$3800

Hookham, (King)
King, Eleanor (Mrs. Robert Hookham)

International acclaim greets suburb artist



Eleanor King puts her artist's touch to work. (Trib photo by Fred Klinger)

Little Trib. 10/3/75

Hookham. (King)
King, Eleanor (Mrs. Robert Hookham)

By Eleanor Nelson

"I don't look like an artist. I look like a housewife," laments Eleanor King, nervously pushing her hair into place.

It's true that the 61-year-old Elmhurst woman, who has received honors for her artistic achievements both here and abroad, looks more like someone you might meet in the supermarket than an internationally famous artist.

But art critics in New York, Chicago, and Paris have characterized her work in terms that contradict the image of the colorless homemaker.

"They have called her portraits 'vigorous,' her landscapes 'noteworthy for their sweep and breadth,' and her giant seascapes 'intensely dynamic.'"

The French government and the city of Paris have given her many honors. For her color theory and art she received an Encouragement au Progres silver medal in 1968. In June she received the Grand Prix Humanaire de France for her color theory and paintings.

If Eleanor King, who is Eleanor King Hookham at home, looks more like a housewife than an artist, perhaps it's because she was a wife and mother almost exclusively until several years ago.

"The day I turned 50, I woke up and thought, I'd better get back into the galleries now, or I never will," she recalled in a recent interview in her home at 289 Adelia.

It was the critics' commentaries on the paintings she had managed to do and have hung in New York and Chicago galleries while still raising her family that encouraged her to "try again," she said.

"You know, most women don't try again. By the time their families are grown, they think it's too late to re-enter their careers," she said.

It has definitely proved to be not too late for King. The energetic grandmother is listed in "Who's Who in American Art," "Who's Who in the Midwest," "Who's Who in American Women," and "The International Directory of Arts" in Berlin.

Her paintings have hung in galleries all over the United States and in Greece, France, and Belgium. Her 12th "one-woman" show in Galerie Marcel Bernheim in Paris is to open Wednesday and continue through Oct. 21.

A one-woman show of hers will also be on display from Sept. 20 through Oct. 10 at the Oak Brook Terrace Community Center, 1S325 Ardmore, near Villa Park.

Despite her international reputation, King wields her paint brush or pencil in the same place many other women pursue their careers: her own home.

"Someday I'd like to have a studio with good light and lots of room. But for now this will have to do," she said, indicating her living and dining rooms and front hall, all awash with canvases.

"I can't even get a cleaning woman to come in. Every one I try refuses to vacuum around the clutter," she complained.

Working in a domestic and slightly chaotic atmosphere can have advantages, however. King credits spilling coffee on a drawing she was working on with the origin of a new art medium.

Attempting to wipe the stains from her pen and ink drawing, she discovered that the brown tones of the coffee mingled companionably with the black ink strokes. The next time, she tipped over her coffee cup intentionally, creating the first of what are her now famous "coffee and ink" drawings.

When conditions get too crowded downstairs, she works in an upstairs bedroom, leaning some of the giant canvases against a four-poster bed.

Once she stood a large canvas in front of her closet door and was part way through her creation before she realized she had "painted herself" out of access to her clothes.

The reason King confines her work to the first and second floors of the home where she and her husband, Robert, live is because she allows many of her students to carry out their projects in the basement.

She teaches about 100 children, teenagers, and adults each week, sharing with them not only the basic principles of art, but her own art philosophy.

"Art is a language, and like any language, its purpose is to communicate," she said.

"But everybody's language is different, and you've got to speak your own. Find your own way and express yourself," she advises her pupils.

That's what she herself has done ever since she began drawing while a child in Oklahoma.

Years spent later on the Florida coast gave

her an intimate acquaintance with the sea that lends depth and motion to her huge seascapes, some of which are composed of three large canvases displayed together as a triptych.

King has been a moving force in the Elmhurst Artist's Guild, of which she was a founding member and has been president several times. The guild and the city park district are attempting to build a fine arts and civic center for the city.

She was not worried about the details of the exhibit at the Galerie Marcel Bernheim. She was more worried about the possibility of being embarrassed by her less-than-perfect French.

"No matter how hard I try, I can never speak the language really well," she lamented.

"My Oklahoma drawl just ruins my French accent."

Little Trib 10/3/75

Hookham
~~King~~, Eleanor^(King) (Mrs. Robert Hookham)



ELEANOR KING (Mrs. Robert Hookham) of Elmhurst, noted painter and President of the Elmhurst Artist's Guild, has just returned from her ninth one-man-show at Galerie-Bernheim, Paris. Mrs. Hookham has exhibited extensively in Illinois and Europe. Many of her paintings are in permanent museum collections here and abroad. She poses here beside her large, three-panel painting of Niagara Falls.

Press Publications
WT-10/18-10/19, '72

ELEANOR KING

Eleanor King who is showing a big ensemble of painting, watercolours and drawings is now well known to Paris by her annual exhibitions at this gallery. In her previous exhibitions there was a sense of the movement of great waters. In this ensemble she has included four great panels of « Niagara Falls ». Each of these panels, four feet high, shows a mass of falling waters which well evokes one of America's greatest features. The artist has been well acquainted with this scene for many years and this, the result of her most recent visit, is undoubtedly something unique in American painting.

Another three panels « Triptych of the Sea », are intensely dynamic.

Her painting of trees such as « Old Tree and Road » and « Tree Majestic » show an innate vision of the structure of the tree where the branches recall the pattern of the roots.

« Sundown at Sea » shows a mysterious quality in the way the disappearing orb lights up the waves like a range of mountains.

In « Moon Ring » in which the moon shows a circular halo we get the impression of an astronomic design.

The watercolours contain a number of delicate landscapes.

« Gulls at Sea » is almost magical in the way the white wings and white cloud formations are fused into one.

« Blue trees » is another astonishing composition in which one can discern the pull of the tree upward from the roots.

The ink and coffee drawings are devoted to a suite of Red Indians, « Oldest on the Reservation » is a trenchant image of Age and its hundred wrinkles. Indian warriors and chiefs families with women and girls, evoke this picture of ancient America.

It is significant that while America of the last two or three decades has been moving towards an impalpable art such as that of Rothko, Kline, Reinhardt and others ; painters such as Eleanor King have turned towards an art of weight and all that is palpable.

The present movement however may be in this direction, since the turn towards Nature and Science both of which can be traced in her work shows that she is moving towards a phase of the future.

Barnett. D. Conlan.

ELEANOR KING

Eleanor KING présente un important ensemble de peintures, aquarelles et dessins d'un style désormais affirmé et reconnu à Paris où chaque année elle expose régulièrement à la Galerie Marcel Bernheim.

Pour sa rentrée elle magnifie encore cet extraordinaire mouvement des eaux où elle excelle. Quatre grands panneaux verticaux, juxtaposés, hauts de 2,50 m, libèrent ici une masse liquide, plongeante, évocatrice de la scène la plus imposante du paysage américain. Depuis des années, l'artiste s'est attachée à ce spectacle unique et ses dernières visions rapportées sont sans précédent dans la peinture du nouveau monde.

La mer aussi reprend ses droits à la faveur d'un triptyque d'une incontestable intensité dynamique. Parallèlement, un « Coucher de soleil en mer » emprunte son mystère au disque irradiant, prêt à disparaître, éclairant étrangement les flots dont les formes épousent celles d'une chaîne de montagnes. Au jeu de l'aquarelle s'illumine le thème des « mouettes sur la mer » fusion blanche des ailes et des nuages d'une éblouissante portée magique.

Une lumineuse diversion nous transporte vers la nature végétale : « l'arbre majestueux », le vieux arbre sur la route » affirment un sens inné des structures par la correspondance secrète des racines et des branches. « Les arbres bleus » témoignent également de cette force cosmique par quoi le géant semble tirer sur ses racines pour monter vers le ciel.

Les dessins (encre et café) illustrent une suite d'Indiens Peaux Rouges saisis sur le vif. « Le plus âgé de la réserve » est une image de la vieillesse où les rides profondes accusent les mille chemins de la vie. Chefs et guerriers enfin, coiffés de plumes, entourés des femmes ou d'enfants nous rappellent cette ancienne Amérique sans jamais tomber dans le pittoresque folklorique.

Tandis que l'Amérique des dernières décades évolue vers un art insaisissable, comme celui de Rothko, Kline, Reinhardt et bien d'autres, déjà en voie de stagnation, Eleanor KING se tourne vers un art volontairement lisible. Ceci est d'autant plus remarquable que les données modernes de la science inclinent vers un retour à la nature: Par là même Eleanor KING, reste, à contre courant à l'avant garde de la recherche et dans l'esprit de la découverte à venir.

Barnett. D. Conlan.

to the Museum of
in Chicago. The
y "live with",
rtifacts on tables
ome. Press 10/22/70

'S ROOM
LIC LIBRARY

OR LENDING
ATERIALS

FOR LENDING
ATERIALS

ES
puted on a week-
ing each Monday,
per item per week
overdue.

d after the due
period free of

will
\$1.50
aterials.
1.00

ourage the re-
verdue materials.

& DAMAGED MATERIAL
lets \$1.00
is 1.00

OR DAMAGED TRANS-

hen return-
\$.50
.25

OUT
.25
ATE CARD .50

be given that
ou clear our
ou receive an

in Elmhurst Display

A private collection of pre-Columbian pottery, carvings, and jewelry dating from 1000 B.C. to 14 A.D. will be on display in the main lobby of the Elmhurst Public Library, Wilder Park, thru this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nelson of Elmhurst, amateur archaeologists, own the collection, which is normally displayed in their home.

Little Trib 10/28/70

the fundamentals of philately will be discussed, how to amount stamps, types of albums available, a discussion of current philatelic catalogs, and where to buy stamps.

President Gene Nesom and other members of the Elmhurst Philatelic Society are expected to attend and give any assistance to collectors or beginners.

A group of stamps will be available for all collectors to be given away.

There will be no dues, or officers involved, and the main purpose of the meetings will be educational and for the swapping of duplicates.

Chicago Trib. Oct 31, 1970

Artist's Star Is Rising

BY ELEANOR PAGE

● MRS. R. E. HOOKHAM, a grandmother who uses her maiden name, Eleanor King, to sign her paintings, will have her work on display at the Elmhurst library this winter.

Recognition has been slow in coming for Mrs. Hookham, partly because she laid down her brushes and paints during the years she was rearing her children. Two of them are

artists also, one in Rochester, N. Y., where she had a pottery exhibit recently. That daughter has a master of fine arts degree in sculpture and ceramics, and teaches at a Rochester high school. Another daughter is bringing up a family in Louisville, where she is on the board of the Louisville Art Center.

But, perhaps in keeping with the sayings about artists being ignored in their own

countries, Mrs. Hookham already has had seven successful shows at the Galerie Marcel Bernheim in Paris.

"Having a show to do pulls everything out of me. I need an incentive to make me produce. Some people don't."

Her most recent exhibit included several large drawings of ghost towns and abandoned mines, remembered from her years growing up in Oklahoma. She was born in Pensacola, Fla., where she had a one man show recently.

"Before I cash in my chips I'd like to see if I can't really make it as a good artist," says Eleanor. Her work, while unsung in Chicago, at least is getting reviews in Art News [one of her paintings was inside the cover of the September issue], the Arts Review in London, and the New York publication, Pictures on Exhibit.

Mrs. Hookham manages to get 40 or 50 paintings ready for a show even while teaching more than 100 students—adults, children and teenagers—in the basement of her home. She uses the money from her classes to buy paints and canvas and for crating the paintings and drawings she sends on exhibit.

Eleanor's husband is getting into the spirit of things, too. He's been studying French along with her, and has gone to Paris with her for the last two shows.

'Friends' Host Reception Lauding Home-Town Artist

Friends of Elmhurst Public library are inviting the public to a reception and preview exhibition of paintings by Eleanor King Hookham, to be held from 2:30 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 7 in the library.

The exhibit, containing a representative collection of the Elmhurst artist's large triptychs of the sea, watercolors, and ink and coffee drawings, will continue at the library through February.

Using her maiden name of Eleanor King, Mrs. Hookham has exhibited in numerous galleries and shows both in this country and abroad. Her large variety of paintings and drawings includes expressionistic, abstract, surrealist, and realistic works.

In charge of the reception to inaugurate the exhibition and honor Mrs. Hookham is Mrs. William Barclay, public relations coordinator for Friends of the Library.

Other Friends working on the event include Mrs. John Carroll, president; Mrs. Ray Fick, publicity chairman; Lawrence Knudson, librarian, and Dorothea Petersen, secretary.

Mrs. Joseph Carter, ex-officio board member, is handling special displays for the exhibit. Flowers for the reception will be arranged by the Elmhurst Garden club.

Mrs. Hookham's work is particularly well known in Paris, where she has had a one-woman show at the Galerie Marcel Bernheim for the past seven years.

In describing Mrs. Hookham's 15-foot seascapes shown at the Paris gallery, Barnett D. Conlan, former art editor on the London Daily Mail, wrote:

"Eleanor King is undoubtedly one of the most authentic seas painters we have had from the U.S.A. Her awareness of the movement of great waters in mountainous masses derives from her sense of rhythm and spontaneity. And there is much



SPECIAL EXHIBITION of paintings and drawings by Eleanor King Hookham, left, will be displayed at the Elmhurst Public library beginning Sunday, Feb. 7, and continuing through the month. The renowned Elmhurst artist is shown at left, explaining one of her paintings to Mrs. William Barclay, chairman of the reception that will inaugurate the exhibit. The reception will be sponsored by the Friends of Elmhurst public library and is open to the public. . . . held between 2:30 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, in the library.

in the powerful drive of these great triptychs to recall the giant onrush of Niagara. It has the same impression of immensity, it is part of America."

In 1968 Mrs. Hookham received the Medaille d'Argent from the city of Paris and the Medaille d-Honneur from the Republique Francaise. One of her large drawings, depicting a Southern funeral in a field, is part of the permanent collection of the

Musee National d'Art Moderne, now part of the famous Louvre museum.

In addition to the sea, other subjects currently favored by the artist include the ghost towns of Colorado and American Indians.

Her unique ink and coffee drawings of Comanchi Indians were exhibited at the Natural History Museum of Colorado last summer.

Mrs. Hookham discovered the pleasing effect of using coffee stans

as a wash . . . when she accidentally spilled coffee on a drawing.

The artist had her first successful New York City exhibits in 1939 and 1940, and then moved to Florida, where she was also widely exhibited. She then "retired" for a period to raise her family of two sons and two daughters.

Since become an active artist again in 1960, Mrs. Hookham has exhibited in such diverse cities as

New York, Chicago, Pensacola, Hallahassee, New Orleans, Mobile, Springfield (Ill.), and Athens, Greece.

Her work has been illustrated in the well known periodical "Art News," and also favorably commented on by the "Arts Review" of London and the New York publication "Pictures on Exhibition."

Mrs. Hookham has lived in Elmhurst with her husband, Robert, since 1945. She has long been active in the Elmhurst Artists Group, serving as president and as chairman or committee member of various projects. In addition to producing her large volume of artistic works, Mrs. Hookham also teaches students in her home studio at 289 Adelia.

1-29-71
The Press Publications

E.H.K.

Feb 10
1971

W Suburban Week, August 25 & 26, 1976



Lithographer Eleanor King-Hookham works on an ink-and-coffee print in her workshop. (Photo by George Franzen)

Coffee-flavored art

An accidental coffee spill on a pen-and-ink drawing started a new idea percolating in Eleanor King-Hookham's mind. The Elmhurst artist liked how the rich brown coffee tones blended with the black ink, so she began using brewed coffee to color her lithographs.

Last year in Paris the technique won the 67-year-old artist the silver Grand Prix Humanitaire de France, a special-achievement award. King-Hookham's latest ink-and-coffee prints, which include scenes of Indians, cowboys and Chicago's Michigan Av., will be displayed at the 14th-annual Oak Brook Fine Arts Promenade on Sept. 4 and 5 at Oakbrook Center, Rt. 83 and 22d.

"When I was 6 years old I was making sketches of all the kids and dogs in the neighborhood and when I was 10 I got my first easel," says King-Hookham, who was born and raised in Marlow, Okla. "After I was married and had 3 children I put my art career

aside. When I turned 50 and the children were on their own my husband told me, 'It's your turn, mama, and since then I've had art coming out of my ears.'"

The artist's imagination and memory supply most of the subject matter for her warmly toned, finely detailed works. "After I go away someplace I come home and paint and draw like mad," she says.

In addition to winning awards for her ink-and-coffee lithographs, the artist has also won many first prizes for her seascape watercolors and oil paintings and has exhibited extensively in New York and Paris. She also conducts art classes in the basement of her home and has just finished writing a 35-page booklet on color techniques. As president of the Elmhurst Fine Arts and Civic Center Foundation and a member of the Elmhurst Artists Guild, King-Hookham is also an active promoter of the arts in the suburbs. "Sometimes people say that I'm too ambitious but I think ambition is a good thing," King-Hookham says. "It keeps me going."

—Lorelei Czarnecki

Having settled our predilection last year on the work of Eleanor King on the occasion of her yearly one-man show with Marcel Bernheim, this year we are again delighted.

Effectively, Eleanor King knows how to renew herself in the lead of an individuality which remains characteristic. In what ?

In an expression of rhythm, of pure color, of subjects where figurative is close to the marvelous with its vibrant virulence, where a musical breath blows.

In her preceding show, the big fresco « River in Florida » reminded us of Debussy. To day it goes back to the time of Berlioz, with « The Earth » which conjures up before us man overburdened the oppressing elements raging in tornado, with colors blue and orange aggressive and ~~dark~~. This quadriptyque faces « The Sea » which issues a sensation of freshness of water and a sentiment of dangerous strength as the sea is too often a man - eater.

However, beside these big compositions, appear also works of more modest size, which allows delicate and various brushes and less epical poetical feelings.

We admire particularly « Boats at sundown », a gouache with watercolor and numerous caricatural portraits with her favorite ink and coffee technique in which she shows a great virtuosity, more especially a diptyque « Bride and bridegroom ». One also sees gouaches of studies, which seem less finished, but finally gain in spontaneity.

Finally, in the portfolios, we run through lithographs printed from the inks.

As a catalog does not allow to give a complete biography, furthermore dotted with successes, (it is not its aim), we shall only point out that last year yielded to this painter new distinctions, notably as laureate of the International Academy of Lutece, who awarded to her a diploma of honor.

All this makes us notice that Eleanor King follows up her ascending way, while her execution, of a lyrical style and colorful palette, progresses in a continuous state of research, sensitive as well in the graphism of her works, where drawing becomes pronounced. We can point out, particularly, a remarkable composition, « Newspaper », genre composition where the quality of sketching mixes with that of imagination, in a paradoxical and successful both surrealist and realistic evocation.

Gathering such a show, of such an artist, is not only a Parisian and pleasing event, but is a typical example of what, following impressionism and fauvism, figurative art can still bring in the actual turmoil which still struggles the world of contemporary art.

Raymond CLERMONT.

Editor of art Mag. "La Revue moderne"
Paris

Ayant fixé notre prédilection, l'an dernier, sur l'œuvre d'Eleanor KING, à l'occasion de son annuelle exposition chez Marcel Bernheim, nous nous en réjouissons de nouveau cette année.

Eleanor KING, en effet, sait se renouveler dans le sillage d'une personnalité qui demeure caractéristique ; par quoi ?

... par une expression de rythme, de couleur pure, de sujets où le figuratif touche au merveilleux par sa virulence vibrante, où passe un souffle musical.

Lors de sa précédente exposition, le Debussysme dominait avec la grande fresque de la « Rivière en Floride » ; aujourd'hui c'est - reculé dans le temps - Berlioz, avec « La Terre », qui évoque l'homme écrasé l'oppression des éléments déchaînés en tornade, dans des bleus et orangés agressifs et douloureux à la fois, un quadriptyque auquel fait face « La Mer », d'où émane une sensation de fraîcheur d'eau et un sentiment de force dangereuse ; car la mer est encore trop souvent mangeuse d'hommes.

Cependant, à côté de ces grandes compositions, figurent également des œuvres de plus modestes dimensions, qui permettent des délicatesses de touches variées et de sentiments poétiques moins épiques.

Nous admirons, en particulier, « Bateaux au couchant », gouache aquarellée, et puis de nombreux portraits-charges, au procédé qui lui est cher - et où elle déploie une grande virtuosité - d'encre et café, notamment un diptyque « Les fiancés ». On voit également des gouaches de recherche absolue, qui semblent moins abouties mais finalement gagnent par la spontanéité. Enfin, dans les cartons, nous feuilletons des lithos, tirées à partir des encres.

Un catalogue ne permettant pas - ce n'est pas son objet - une biographie complète, par ailleurs jalonnée de succès, nous noterons seulement que l'année écoulée a valu à ce peintre de nouvelles distinctions, notamment comme lauréat de l'Académie Internationale de Lutèce, qui lui a attribué un diplôme d'honneur.

Tout cela nous fait constater qu'Eleanor KING poursuit sa voie ascendante, tandis que sa facture, d'un style lyrique et d'une palette de coloriste, évolue dans un perpétuel état de recherche, très sensible également dans le graphisme de ses encres, où le dessin s'affirme. Nous pouvons signaler, particulièrement, une remarquable composition « Le journal », composition de genre où la qualité du croquis s'allie à celle de l'imagination, en une paradoxale - et réussie - évocation surréaliste et réaliste à la fois.

La réunion d'un tel ensemble, et d'une telle artiste, est non seulement un événement parisien, d'agrément, mais un exemple type de ce que, dans la suite de l'impressionnisme et du fauvisme, l'art figuratif peut encore apporter de positif dans l'état de confusion actuel où se débat encore - nous serions tentés de dire : le marché - le monde de l'art contemporain.

Raymond CLERMONT.