



ARTIST AVONNA LEE Landwehr displays her lithographs on 'hands' and added that machines have replaced hands in most instances. "Only the mother's hands cannot be replaced by a machine," she confided.

Artist Lauds Use Of Hands In Inks

Art can cut across language barriers and reach into the human heart with such impact that Elmhurst artist, Avonna Lee Landwehr, realizes after her experiences this past summer in Rome and South Africa have changed her way of seeing, her line of vision.

"The more I saw, the more I cared, I'll never be able to erase what happened to me or pretend it doesn't matter. I only have a greater responsibility as an artist to translate human suffering, tragedy and love into symbols that reveal the deepest secrets of my essential being," she explained.

Immediately upon her return from South Africa, she was asked by DeSoto Inc. to do a portfolio of ink drawings that would distill or enhance the essence of the important things human hands have been doing until they were replaced by the machine. The drawings had to be non-illustrative, timeless and deceptively simple. She found the task a challenge not only of skill in drawing hands, but to create them with a quality of infinity and not so complete that the imagination of the viewer would be stifled.

The tension in pulling the yarn during spinning should be felt as well as movement of the turning clay pot and the sweep of a sickle during harvest. Holding the attention on the quiet hand of a mother, a perennial subject, was a direct expression of feeling by the unexpected use of the feet of an infant. Possibly the subject of maternity will be passe, so her choice of subjects of all eight hands carries themes of human ability to create and fulfill the law of love in

relation to responsibility. The man with a sickle, the woman knitting, the carpenter, the woman churning butter as well as the hammer and chisel of the sculptor in stone are inspirations and the artist to embody time and express the human spirit by using only the hands. Avonna Lee added she distrusts "popular trends that will soon be out of styles, as they do not effect me because they lack integrity."

"I'm willing to study the rest of my life, looking forward to progression of expression," she continued. When she was asked by DeSoto Inc. to put out a line for wall decor, her immediate response was 'no' to any form of commercial art. DeSoto was specifically looking for a contemporary artist who was capable of rendering a series in the "old Masters" tradition, so Mrs. Landwehr took on the challenge and the result is now released nationally having opened the new line at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago.

With this work completed for now, she relaxed with a book on Rodin who expressed the feeling of infinity and wonder in his works. Quality works should be ageless, understood by other generations than the current one, he advocated.

She realized that all of the works have theological significance though the models for her hands were from contemporary studies in Elmhurst, the themes reflect the Scriptures.

"Theology in Art" is a frequent topic of the artist's for lectures and was the subject matter for a course on art for the Ecumenical Lay Academy.

Landwehr, Avonna Lee

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11/21/74

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