

Stage Sets, Too, Illusion-Makers

By ETHEL SIMMONS
Arts Editor

"If you have good actors, they can play against a black cloth," said Russell Dunbar, set designer for the Village Players. "Anything scenic should heighten illusion, not destroy it."

Dunbar was just putting the finishing touches to a backdrop he was painting for "Inherit the Wind," which opened last week end and continues this Friday and Saturday at the playhouse, 752 Chestnut, Birmingham.

"I like to design and paint," Dunbar said. "This has been all new experience to me the last two years. 'I've worked on 'Ah, Wilderness,' 'The Blooming Newcomers' and 'Thurber Carnival'—for that we used three turntables and 32 flats."

"INHERIT THE WIND" is the fourth show for Dunbar. "All action takes place in the village square, and there's a cast of 42. We need as much space as possible."

Dressed in paint-spattered coveralls, Dunbar gestured outward, "I've used forced

perspective, which foreshortens rapidly. From the audience this gives the impression of depth.

"Door heights are made smaller to give the impression of beginning set back further. The set is back-lighted to give the effect of sky. Buildings of the back drop are much further back."

"The whole bag of tricks," Dunbar emphasized, "is to create illusion. The theatre is illusion stylized realism. 'This village square set is not a hole in a picture. The audience should feel they are sitting out there where the buildings are.'"

BY PROFESSION, Dunbar designs ranges at the General Motors Tech Center in Warren. His wife, Jane, is an art teacher in Detroit. Both are members of the Village Players and together make posters for the shows. They live in Detroit and are presently designing a new home in Farmington, which they plan to build next summer.

Mrs. Dunbar has appeared in previous Village Players' productions. Dunbar, besides designing sets, has a part in the current show—no lines, though—he's a jurymankind of like a backdrop.



SET DESIGNER Russell Dunbar paints a flat for Village Players' production of "Inherit the Wind." Dunbar has been active in the Players for the last two years.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

By CAROLYN HALL

Painters Abandon Outmoded Cliches Of Color Pattern

Everyone knows blue is heavenly, black is funeral—no, sophisticated—white is for weddings unless it's Japan—then it's red for weddings—yellow is for cowardice except it is also for brilliant sunshine.

Confusing? Color associations of this general type are mainly literary. Past tradition has led to this categorizing of colors. A single color says little more than one note of music until it is related to a whole pattern of relationships.

There are endless nuances of combination. Why the colors to outmoded clichés? Why should color be only secondary in meaning? Thus began the revolution.

Revolutions occur dramatically. Yet it takes a long time for changes to become a part of human tradition.

THE REVOLUTION in color occurred just before the beginning of the 20th century. Mattise and Van Gogh, riding herd with the dynamic French moderns, learned the power of color, bright and strong. But this shift of emphasis has taken a long time to penetrate fully.

Old masters learned their skill as painters in terms of line and form. "Cartoons" (line drawings of the design of the painting) were transferred to the canvas and color applied to fill it out—the third element in painting, not the first.

This delightful statement appeared in a work considered authoritative in 1880. "The union of drawing and colour is necessary to engender painting, as the union of man and woman engender humanity; but drawing must retain its preponderance over color. If it does not, the painting runs to its destruction; it will be ruined by color."

THUS, PAINTERS conclude, there is no need to trouble with the truth of "nature;" the artist can create his own truth. And even the subject of a painting can dwell in the color.

None believe this more completely than the abstract expressionists. Color is form and line in their works. They explore the interior world of emotion and subconscious. Some inner force causes the painting to grow, reacting on itself. Intellectual deliberation might spoil this communicative flow.

Advertising men are less mystic about their knowledge of color. They use the results of a multitude of surveys and tests to determine consumer color responses.

SOFT GREEN waiting rooms lull the anxious dentist's patient, bright orange or red dining rooms hurry the eaters through their meals and fewer people leap off bridges that



Opera Stars

These are puppet performers of the Opera in Focus Festival Theatre which will present two shows Saturday, Nov. 30, at The Community House, Birmingham. A benefit for the Birmingham Musicals' scholarship fund, the program will feature scenes from best-loved operas. An hour-long performance will begin at 2 p.m., and a two-hour evening show is slated for 8:15 p.m., with an intermission coffee.

have been painted a brighter color than black.

Some psychologists have proven to be fact, painters have sensed intuitively. Everyone has a clearly-developed set of color responses. Some are personal (you had a favorite blue toy), some are physiological (red actually appears larger, more advancing than blue), some are social-industrial (sounds awful, doesn't it? It means red for stop, green for go and red, white and blue for the flag.)

THESE EMOTIONAL and learned responses, plus others we are less aware of, cause our reactions to paintings.

"That old saw, 'Well, I don't understand painting but I know what I like,' is true in terms of emotional reaction to color. Most people have no idea how ritualized their color responses are."

"Live a little!" exhort the painters.

It's quite daring to give complete supremacy to color in painting. The abstract expressionist purposely aims to be as nearly out of control as possible. Emotion reins supreme and only a touch of intuitive intellectual control is allowed to guide the painting.

Abstract expressionist painting is on the wane, but color will still have its sway.

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Painter

(Continued from 1-D)

THE SCULPTURE is also abstract. Deuker prefers to work with wood which he carves into strong fluid shapes using space as an integral part of the structure.

Mrs. Deuker says her husband was using space in compositions before anyone ever heard of Henry Moore—the artist who is generally accredited with having introduced space into sculpture.

A year ago the Deukers moved into their home at 2106 Stablin, Southfield, a handsome gray brick structure. The interior was entirely designed by Deuker. The rough construction and finished carpentry was done by their engineer son Robert.

"It is to us a dream come true," says Mrs. Deuker. "It still doesn't seem possible. We have everything we've ever dreamed of in terms of design and space."

THE SPACE includes a studio for painting, a studio for sculpturing and a lovely gallery entrance hall lined with Deuker's paintings and sculpture.

The decor is generally modern with a few notable exceptions—like the beautiful old hand-carved couch in the painting studio. It was designed by Deuker's great-grandfather.

All the draperies in the house were made by Mrs. Deuker, which Deuker points out with obvious pride.

"This is my area," says Mrs. Deuker. "I am happy to sew, bake, garden and keep house. I have no desire to paint. My husband is the artist."

"BUT SHE HAS a marvelously-developed critical sense—far better than mine," Deuker says.

"But I wouldn't have had that unless I'd married you," adds Mrs. Deuker.

One leaves the Deukers with respect for Fredrik Deuker as an artist and genuine pleasure for having been with happy, interesting people.

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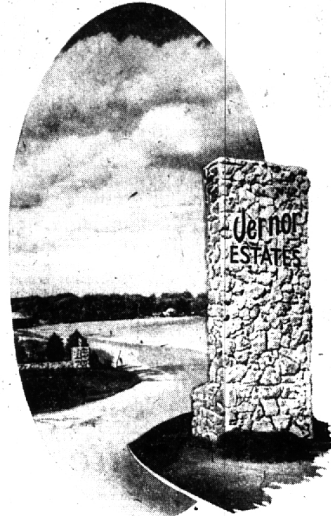
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