

DAILY NEWS SEPT 27



NEWS photo by Evelyn Straus

When mother is the artist, artist's life is anything but lonely. Recalling days spent juggling school plays and one-woman shows are, from left, Diana Hesketh, Brigid Marlin Oakley and Hilda van Stockum Marlin. One of Diana's wood sculptures is on the table; Mrs. Marlin's still lifes are shown in the background.

In this family, art is a living and living is an art

By BETH FALLON

The three Marlins are artists and they are mothers. Success in either occupation is difficult; in both, it is phenomenal.

Hilda van Stockum Marlin, 64, set the pace. At 24, the Dutch-born painter married Ervin Marlin, an American, and moved to Washington, D.C. There she raised their six children while continuing to paint the portraits and still lifes that have earned acclaim in shows around the world.

"I was a painter always," Hilda Marlin said reflectively. "That had been my life, this inner thing. When I had babies, I painted babies. And still lifes seemed such a calm refuge, with six active children."

During the same period, she also wrote and illustrated more than 25 children's books for major publishers.

Among the six children, she gave birth to two painters—Brigid, now 36 and Sheila, 32. Each is a successful artist living in England with a husband and three children.

Brigid, Sheila and their mother have a joint show through Oct. 4 at the van der Straeten Galleries on Madison Ave. Also shown is sculpture by Diana Hesketh, a friend of Brigid's and the busy mother of five children.

After the opening, Hilda, Brigid and Diana contributed a word portrait of the artist, as young mother.

"To me," said Hilda, "there seemed to be plenty of time to paint. Sometimes I wonder what people do with their time, they say they are so busy. So you do your housework in one hour a day, instead of eight. A little bit of dust doesn't hurt anyone, I mean, it's not dangerous," she laughed.

"People say they haven't got the time as an excuse," said Brigid. "I have more trouble coordinating with three children, than mother did with six. I don't really know how she did it. But I need to paint."

"It is more difficult for a woman artist; she has to stop in the middle of work and

get the tea, or something. I did a picture of a woman trapped in a kitchen among refuse and chores, with a huge teardrop coming out of the faucet, reflecting, her face getting old."

Brigid paused, and looked troubled. "Women at the London show said to me that they felt that way, that sometimes they just wished they would go down the drain, too, with the garbage."

"Boredom is the worst thing," Diana said. "My husband encourages me, and with five children and my work to do, one would think it's never a problem. But it is; sometimes I just sit and can't move myself to do anything. I think a lot of women are affected that way."

Each woman uses her gift, and expresses it, by employing things near at hand. Diana's elongated figures in wood require only materials and talent. Sheila paints her children and friends. Hilda's still lifes are mushrooms, bottles, fruit—"the simplest of objects," she said.

Brigid's symbolic paintings come largely from her imagination. The portrait of a friend winds up crowned with a giant iris—"because that's a symbol of life, and that's how she is."

Finally, Hilda Marlin pointed out, managing work and love and children becomes a matter of priorities.

"It depends on what seems important to you. I remember one morning when Brigid was about 7. She was going off to church as I started to prepare Sunday dinner. She said 'Oh, I wish there was a fairy in the flowers on the windowsills.'

"It went straight to my heart, the way she said it," Hilda remembered. "So while she was gone, I made a little fairy, out of a bit of wire, and put it there, for her to find. I don't know what we had for dinner that day, probably bread and butter and cheese. But the look on her face, the joy of it, that I will never forget."

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