an

ram

nt of its surface reveal details cross, about teld. This is

ny previous p

as done is tell

Venus and th

ar

olishments b

was how mu

the way he is

son of consta oaching the 10

ica are going to e and that's the "And I believe nd will continue

arty

a more secu

ant perestro

a speech. " general sec

10n

kpot could

ears, and som

e this, sellinganges," Ross said on, he said, th

gency printin

Art from behind the walls

Inmates create art within Huntsville prison

Photos by Mike C. Mulvey

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

Some of the inmates in the Texas Department of Corrections' prison sysiem can take trips to the moun-

tains whenever they want.

If they choose, they can be visited by friends or relatives in their cells. In fact, they are free to see whonever they want or to go anywhere in the world — as long as it is done brough their art.

Since the Windham School System was established in 1968 to provide educational and vocational dasses for Texas' prisoners, art dasses have given prisoners the opportunity to develop their creativity.

Molly Campbell, the art instructor at the Huntsville Unit (which is nicknamed "The Walls," because of the high red brick walls that surround the transfer of the prison art to work out in the gym," Campbell said with a grin.

The atmosphere of the prison art the prison), conducts six one-hour art classes each weekday. Between 10 and 20 students attend each class. Some of the Huntsville Unit's art

students are not required to attend classes, either because they have a attained a certain reading level or they have a GED. Otherwise, the inmate must go to school.

School involves three hours of classes and an additional hour of ei-

The atmosphere of the prison art classes is noticeably different from those conducted outside prison walls. Classes are always under the watchful eyes of a prison guard or two, although Campbell says that in the eight years she has been teaching in The Walls, she has never had a serious disciplinary incident in any of her classes.

Prison instructors generally do not get to know their students on a ther art or gym, whichever the in-mate prefers. "This causes us to have a lot of beginning art students who address their pupils by their last names, such as "Inmate Smith."

"It's a matter of maintaining a teacher/student relationship, and not having an overly friendly relation-ship," Campbell said. "You maintain

personally, as a teacher, try to start them wherever they are and go from there. With some people, if they're here long enough, you can develop their taste in different directions, or maybe they'll be more willing to try to express themselves,

- Molly Campbell,

know why (they're in prison)," she chiefs, too, had to be banned for

some time.

making paintings or drawings of things they make up in their heads,

many prison artists want to be literal

ask them, 'What is your goal, what do you want to be able do to?' and

they'll say 'I want to be able to draw what I see,' " Campbell said. "I say,

'OK, we'll start there.'

When new students come in. I

"I personally, as a teacher, try to

start them wherever they are and go

from there. With some people, if

they're here long enough, you can

develop their taste in different directions, or maybe they'll be more willing to try to express themselves, in-

stead of being copyists."

The inmates often want to learn

to do a specific type of realist painting — portraits, she said.

"They all want to do portraits —

they want to do their mother and

their brother and their children, and

they want to do other people so they can make money," she said. "I don't

know why, but portraits are the big

the TDC), since a picture of some-

one else's momma isn't going to sell,

unless she's a real neat-looking cha-

the show along with the picture the painting was based on. Generally a

note is attached to these works, indi-

cating that the inmate artist is inter-

ested in taking orders to do other

sioning an inmate to do a portrait may place their order at the upcom-

picting life behind bars, she said.

From an economic standpoint, that

fact is surprising, she said, because many of the people attending the art

shows are interested in buying

they'd rather be," she said.

"But most of them (inmates)

Several themes show up at the art

show each year. At last year's show,

many of the artists submitted works

dealing with Indians, other western

Customers interested in commis-

Only a few artists do what is known as "prison art" - scenes de-

Some inmates send portraits to

racter," Campbell said.

ing Art Show

prison art.

The prison setting prevents the which are popular with the people your position as a teacher. It's true for officers as well as teachers. It's a als in their art. Campbell said that at the shows. "What I'm finding is for a while, her students were pre-vented from using some kinds of ink to year, that's what they continue to pens, because inmates would steal do," Fisher said. vented from using some kinds of ink

Apparently, the prisoners know their market, because Fisher estithem and use them to make tattoos. She also said that painting on handkerchiefs was popular for a mates that about 75 while, but those could be taken as well and used by the inmates to barMany of the piece mates that about 75 percent of the Many of the pieces on display at this year's show are nature and out-

doors scenes, but the range of topics is endless. With almost 800 pieces of art submitted by 106 inmate artists, Campbell said that many prison art students have different goals for most tastes are covered.

There are portraits of everyone from Donald Duck and Thumper their art than do art students in the outside world. Rather than devel-oping an individual style of art or Rabbit to Marilyn Monroe, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert E. Lee.



Painting by Charli Miller

Besides oil and acrylic paintings, there are pastels, watercolors, pen and ink and pencil drawings, and crafts that include crochet and small

thing.
"You won't see many portraits
here (on display at Wynne Unit of stained-glass pieces.

The work of inidvidual artists can be dissimilar. Inmate Charli Miller of the Terrace 3-A Unit, who signs his works "Charli 'Bad to the Bone' Miller," had a series of paintings on display that depicted a skull in flames, a lady on a dragon, and a Medusa figure. Next to these works was a painting of a beaming clown.

The inspirations and reasons behind their works can vary, too.

Campbell said inmates often get involved with art in prison because they did not have time for it in the outside world.

"In prison, they get involved with things they didn't have time for on the outside — art, religion, and writing - mostly letters," she said. " doesn't mean they stay with it when they leave.

Santiago Patino, one of Campbell's students in The Walls, had several paintings of Elvis Presley on sale, some for as much as \$65. He says he plans to continue with his art once he gets out.

In an essay he wrote to accom-

would prefer to paint and forget prison, and do landscapes and places pany some of his art at a show last year, Patino explained why much of his art deals with Elvis: "I guess EL-VIS has been a big influence on my life. To me ELVIS is still the king and I know he will live in the hearts of many of us forever. I like to wear white shoes like ELVIS and dress a little like him. ELVIS PRESLEY has always been a superstar to me, and I

Drawing by Patrick Arnold

admire him very much."
Another of Campbell's students, John Ellis, created paintings of outdoor mountain scenes with a man chopping wood. Campbell said that Ellis told her that these scenes were of where he wanted to be and of things he wanted to do. He didn't copy the scenes from a picture; he

made them up.
Walls artist Truman Moffett
wrote this about his art: "To me, art is three whole different things. One is a personal, expression sort of a thing; one is portraits and one is income type art. Not many people see my personal art, even though it's what I am most involved in. It's mostly surrealistic, dream-like pie-

For the past 16 years, the Windham System has put on an Art Show mate artists.

"It was started in an effort to get (inmate) students not only some type of theraputic interchange with their creativity, but also, we began to encourage them to do this as a means to earn a little money that they could put in their inmate trust funds," Fisher said. The artists who submit works set

the price for each of their art pieces based on the amount of work that went into it, she said. All the money from the sales (except for sales tax) goes into the inmate artists' personal accounts, An inmate can use the money in his account to buy supplies, send it to someone outside the prison, or leave it deposited until he is released.

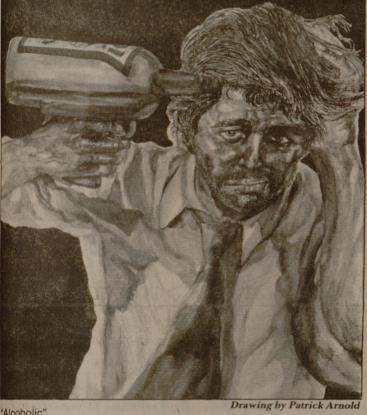
The art show and sale originally was part of the annual prison rodeo, but because the rodeo no longer takes place, the art show has evolved

into an event of its own. Eleven prison units from around the state submitted art for this year's show. Much of the artwork comes from the Huntsville Unit of the TDC

prison system. This year's show and sale will be May 6 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the Windham School Administration Building at the Wynne prison unit in Huntsville.



Painting by Santiago Patino



"Alcoholic"

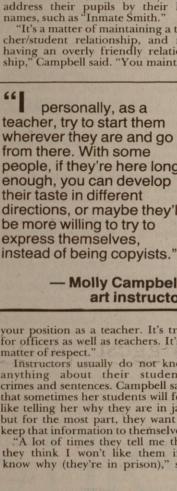
d the jackpo st another roll-

resa Donavich Burgettstown io border. town until receive 5 cen

were postedi n hand due t

yling Center & perm, plu

Molly Campbell, art instructor for the Huntsville Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections, shows a sample of inmate H.R. Clark's art in the Windham School System's administration building.



art instructor matter of respect." Instructors usually do not know anything about their students' crimes and sentences. Campbell says that sometimes her students will feel like telling her why they are in jail, but for the most part, they want to keep that information to themselves.

"A lot of times they tell me that ter with one another, which somethey think I won't like them if I times led to fights. The handker-

Drawing by Mill Lee "Cat sitting on a pole"

Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

themes, and a lot of nature scenes, said Dr. Alice Fisher, art coordinator for the Windham School System. She also said that clown drawings,