

Drumm

Artist admits slowing down a bit at age 64

Continued from Page C1

ate the intellectual firepower that still drives this community and gives it - and his work - national exposure. He could have taken his talent to New York or Florida but chose to plant roots in Akron.

It must be his family ties. Drumm was raised in Warren, but his mother, Helen Stingel, grew up in Akron in the German enclave known as Goosetown. He even remembers the story she used to tell of being chased and bitten by a neighbor's goose.

He credits an almost genetic affinity for working with metal - his grandfather was a blacksmith and his father a mechanic - for the unexpected tack his life took.

What now seems a happy accident that forced a young graphic designer into sculpture was in 1960 nothing short of a disaster.

A month before his marriage to Lisa Plavcan, he was laid off by the industrial design firm that brought him to Akron in 1958.

"Everything happened to me in 1960," the Kent State University graduate recalled. "I got fired, got married and opened a business."

It wasn't a particularly auspicious time to be setting up shop as an artist, both Drumms recall. While widely accepted now as art with a function, crafts in 1960 were sneered at as inferior to "serious" art.

Lisa Drumm, an artist whose whimsical soft sculptures developed a following all their own, said in that climate the choices were few: Either starve for the sake of your art or hope to be discovered and rewarded.

"There was no middle ground," she said. The newlyweds took the chance anyway.

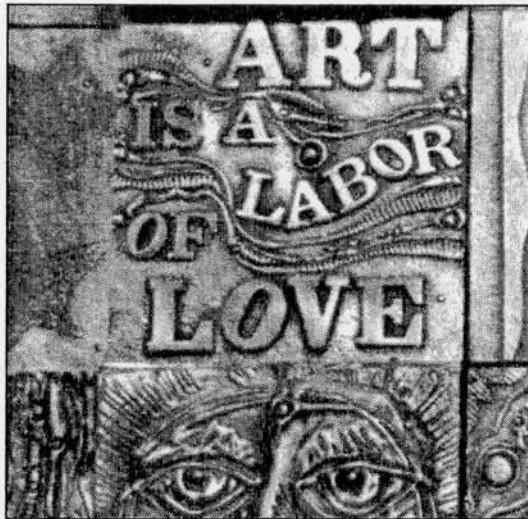
He devoted himself to sculpture - mostly steel and cast aluminum - while she fed the growing family on her salary as an art teacher.

The early years were slim; only three galleries in the country handled this type of work. In 1965, Drumm became artist in residence at Bowling Green State University, commuting home on weekends, to earn a regular paycheck. By the time he moved back to Akron full time in 1971, only two of those three stores remained; they both closed shortly after he bought the Crouse Street building. Undeterred, he continued his



KIMBERLY BARTH/Akron Beacon Journal photo

Don Drumm and his wife and business partner, Lisa, work out of their Akron gallery at 437 Crouse St. The Drumms will host a 40th anniversary open house and a special show from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. tomorrow.



Artist Don Drumm is now crafting pewter tiles adorned with metal castings of different materials.

work. At the same time, the crafts movement emerged from second-class status to full acceptance as legitimate art. That rising tide helped lift the Drumms' boat.

The Don Drumm Gallery and the Different Drummer, housed in a multicolored century home that snuggles up to the original foundry building, are listed among the top 10 crafts galleries in the United States and Canada.

The artist with a monkish tonsure, white beard and dancing blue eyes credits his wife with parlaying her artistic instincts into a national reputation. She joined the firm to run the business in the early '80s.

Lisa Drumm, who said the past 40 years have "been a lot of fun," has a slightly more bemused view of the family history. As an artist, Drumm is con-

tinually going off in different directions building things, she said.

"Building takes six months; managing is forever."

About a year ago, Drumm took his metal sculpture in a new direction, crafting 4- by 4-inch pewter tiles adorned with metal

castings of materials as diverse as sea shells, polished stones and pasta. Saturday's show will feature many pieces crafted from the tiles.

At age 64, he's slowing down a bit, he admitted. Arthritis forces him to wear a neck brace to relieve a pinched nerve. Still, he said, he manages to keep up his 12- to 14-hour-a-day schedule. His major concession to age is work space he leases behind his gallery. It's quiet there.

"I'm jealous of my time. I don't have that much left," he said.

And, like any true son of Akron, he keeps the passion for one dream alive: He wants a ride on the Goodyear blimp.

Sarah Vradenburg can be reached at 330-996-3747 or svradenburg@thebeaconjournal.com

On display

A smattering of public art by Don Drumm, by no means a complete list:

- Sandblasted concrete retaining wall along west side of entrance ramp off Carroll Street to southbound state Route 8 expressway, Akron.

- *Sky Notch*, 20-foot-high freestanding outdoor steel sculpture, John D. Morley Health Center, 177 S. Broadway, Akron.

- Cascade Plaza, Akron, outdoor stainless steel rod and cast aluminum panels fountain.

- Exterior concrete wall relief sculpture at Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron.

- Sandblasted brick relief American Indian, Portage Path School in Highland Square, Akron.

- Free-standing American Indian with eagle sculpture at Watershed Park, Marvin and Corson avenues in Highland Square.

- Memorial sculpture, 13-foot-high exterior wall relief sculpture, cast and welded aluminum, Jewish Community Center, Akron.

- Free-standing outdoor sculpture in front of Taylor Hall, Kent State University.