

**Don Drumm**

# The Machine-Age Artist

By **HAROLD KITNER**

Ask some people what are the working habits of the artist and the response is likely to be a knowing leer and a sly roll of the eyes.

Descriptions of studios will likely run the gamut from places draped with velvet to attics liberally sprayed with beer cans, a skylight...and a woman lurking in a corner. Popular myths encouraged by Hollywood.

If it would be nice if the whole population of the Akron area could be taken through the studio of Don Drumm. Drumm, a sculptor and designer who is at the beginning of a most promising career shares a ramshackle building with a tire mold company. No women, no velvet, just sand everywhere, tire molds, acetylene torches, scraps of metal rusting in corners and furnaces for melting aluminum. In the Summer the place is suffocating hot, and in the Winter freezing cold except when the furnaces are going.

There is a window cut into the roof but the glass is broken. It's typical of Drumm's ingenuity that in preparing his metal sculpture, "The Burning Bush" for the Akron Spring Show he needed a rust patina. A rainy night, water pouring in through the broken glass in the roof and the next morning the iron parts of this piece were nice and rusty.

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**STANDING** in the middle of Drumm's chaotic room is a new piece in process. Called "Pile the Bodies High," it is a cloud shape of cast aluminum torsos welded together. Still to be solved is the problem of the stand which must be sturdy and yet continue the airy quality of the sculpture itself.

In a corner are some cast aluminum pieces for a table Drumm has designed for his Gallery 10 company. The table and other pieces in a similar vein are selling well nationally.

The two items, the table and the profound commentary of his unfinished piece of sculpture typify a po-



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tential dilemma 26-year-old Drumm faces. For it is yet to be proven that an artist can function with equal intensity in both the fine and the decorative arts.

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**RENAISSANCE** artists came closest to being able to function dualistically. But this no longer is the Renaissance. Business pressures, with built in amorality, are too strong to brook interference from esthetic concepts which are personal and not necessarily saleable.

But it is part of the driving optimistic character of Drumm that he is willing to try. And he may succeed for Drumm is a member of that new generation which is completely a part of the modern technological explosion. He converses most intensely when he talks about what he has found out about modern casting and welding techniques. His is the world of synthetics and machine production.

So excited is he by these new horizons that he is well known in many industrial laboratories in the area where he goes to test new products to

see whether they can be used for his art purposes.

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**IT IS** the challenge of new techniques which is the real motivating force at the moment behind Drumm's work. Consequently it does not matter too much. Drumm contends, whether he works on "Pile the Bodies High" or a table.

Further, he does not believe, again because of modern technological controls, that it is necessary for him personally to execute most of his commercial designs. There are all sorts of concerns, machines and craftsmen who can do this for him. His partner, John Mazzola also is of great help. For promotion and other aspects of the business side of the Gallery 10 venture are in his hands.

The real test of the validity of Drumm's assumptions will occur when the commercial orders build up considerably and demand constantly more attention.

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**MEANWHILE,** Drumm singlehandedly has created a revival of interest in sculpture in the Akron area. His awards in recent years in Akron shows have been monotonously consistent. This year, the first time he has been eligible to exhibit in the Cleveland May Show he took one of the major awards in sculpture. Drumm's most important contribution is that he has excited the young artist to the possibilities inherent in the monumental piece. His work is consistently ambitious. Totally lacking in his work is the lacy figurine approach which has been so prevalent in this area.

But most significant of all is that most of Drumm's career lies ahead of him.

At Kent State University he picked up a general education in art. With Scherr and McDermott, Industrial Designers, he was first introduced to modern casting techniques and received a commercial orientation.

On his own in the last year he has expanded this knowledge and has had his first concentrated taste of commissions. Add to this talent which still is not measurable in depth, ambition and inexhaustible energy and the future looks bright indeed.