

From Spain to Wilmot

Art expression of life, says visiting artist

Art to Carmelo Bilbao-Unanue is an expression of life.

It is also his living. His paintings hang in the United Nations building in New York and in private and public collections in many nations.

The paintings of the artist from the Basque region of Spain have been called by critics as unique in that nation's art.

Bilbao-Unanue was in the United States last week, but not to unveil his latest work or lecture at a big city art museum. He and his family were visitors at the home of Paul and Mary Ann Megge on Riley Road, Kingston township.

Since 1964, the artist has been married to Jeanne der Kinderen, a native of the Netherlands. When she was a student in her native country, she was a class-

mate and good friend of the now Mrs. Megge, who met her husband when she was an exchange student at Walled Lake High School in 1962-63.

The visit last week was the first time they had seen each other in seven years.

Bilbao-Unanue met his wife in 1963 when he was working in the Dutch consulate in his native city of Bilbao and she came in. The first thing they discovered in common was they both spoke English.

They have one daughter, Amaia Bilbao-der Kinderen, 15. (In Spain, the wife does not take her husband's last name. Their children's last names are a combination of those of their parents. It is only coincidence that part of the artist's last name is the same as that of his native city.)

CARMELO BILBAO-

Unanue, born in 1928, was only 4 years old when persons noticed his drawings.

"As a child, I was good at drawing," he explained, "but you don't think of yourself (at that age) as good at drawing." He decided he would be a writer.

But when he finished the equivalent of high school, he wasn't sure what his true calling would be. He started traveling, to many countries in Europe, and in 1951 to Toronto, Canada, where he lived until 1962.

Bilbao-Unanue, who speaks English, French, German and Italian in addition to Spanish, worked as a translator.

IN 1953, WHEN HE WAS 26, he started to paint. It was the result of a bet.

He and a friend, a Yugoslavian student, were both unsuccessful short story writers, garnering only re-

jection slips from publishers.

Bilbao-Unanue told his friend he had always had an idea he should try painting.

"He (the friend) said that's very difficult. It might be 10 years before you sell your first painting."

The result was a bet, that the artist-to-be would sell his first painting before his friend sold his first short story. The loser would buy the other a Christmas dinner.

A few months later, Bilbao-Unanue sold his first painting for \$30 to a painter. His friend paid for the dinner.

"That encouraged me, but I wanted to make sure I could draw." He went to Mexico and whatever he saw of interest, he drew.

In Mexico, he met some persons from Alabama, who invited him to go back

with them. He spent six months in that state and had his first exhibition of his paintings at a college in Montgomery.

From Alabama, he went to Quebec, Canada, and sold some more paintings. "I remember I had success for the first time."

He then returned to Europe. "My idea was to get into contact with the Old World." He was in France, Germany and Austria.

"All the time I was painting and drawing. The main factor for success is work. You have to work all the time."

As mentioned, he was in Bilbao when he met his wife. After their marriage, they went to Norway for a time, where they lived off his paintings, to Germany, where their daughter was born, and finally returned to Bilbao, in October, 1967. They live in the country, outside the city of more than 350,000.

BILBAO - UNANUE'S travels were for a purpose. He was searching, to find himself, to find his style.

He is a modern artist. What he paints is not a duplicate of what he sees but what he feels.

"All art expression is pure biology," he explained. "If I was a black man, I would express my art differently."

The artist began painting in an Impressionist style, in which the artist's depiction of what he sees is based on the reflection of light on it. The finished product gives an impression of reality.

Next, Bilbao-Unanue tried Cubism, which deals with the relationship of shapes and light.

To the viewer who knows nothing about art, Cubism is a "farther out" style. Elements may be recognizable, but the meaning isn't as obvious.

EVENTUALLY, THE artist knew he had found the style that was uniquely his, beyond Cubism.

He doesn't foresee continuing evolution. "I think when you reach your own style, it is very difficult to change. When you have reached it, there is very little you can do about it . . . because it expresses your inward personality."

His paintings reflect a somber quality and a lonely one. Boats are often beached on deserted shores, human figures are often alone.

His Basque heritage influences his art, he said. The Basque people got to Spain before anyone else did and their language is unique in the world. Their history has been one of domination by the Spaniards.

Bilbao-Unanue notes with a touch of sadness that the one language he cannot speak is his native Basque, except for a few words. When he was growing up, its teaching was not allowed.

THE ARTIST RAN HIS

own art school in Bilbao from 1967-77. It is only for the past three years that he has been able to support his family comfortably solely off the art he creates.

The minimum his paintings sell for, a canvas of 17 by 20 inches, is \$2,000.

He could become a millionaire if he turned out paintings the way an auto plant turns out cars, he said, but he will never do it. "Art is your soul. You couldn't do that for money alone."

"We have not sold to some

people, knowing they would buy it because of the signature alone," (that is buying a painting for the prestige of his name.)

Bilbao-Unanue will sometimes work on as many as seven paintings at a time, painting the backgrounds until inspiration comes.

All great works of art have life in them, he explains.

"Without life, a painting is dead." His paintings, he says without sounding a bit egotistical, have life.

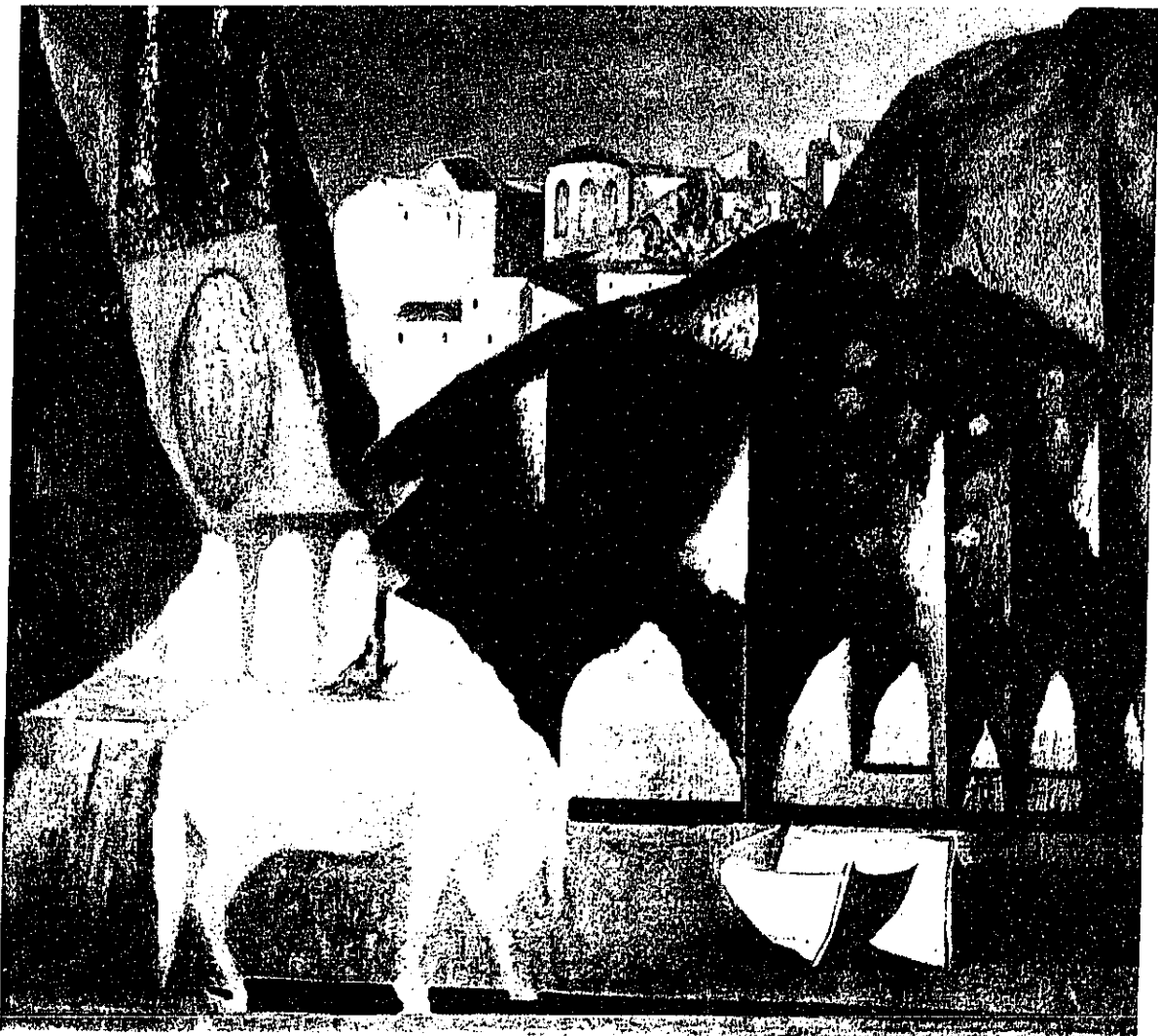
It is in instilling life which inspiration is needed. "The last moment of painting is the most difficult. It is always the life of painting you give at the moment."

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The artist has donated a book showing his work primarily drawings, Rawson Memorial Library. Three books showing his paintings are there temporarily.



VISITING Mary Ann Megge (right) and her family were Basque artist Carmelo Bilbao-Unanue, his wife Jeanne and their daughter, Amaia. The visitors from Spain were there from Sept. 20-27. The books on the table are all devoted exclusively to the works of the artist.



'PASSAGE WITH HORSE,' painted in oils by Carmelo Bilbao-Unanue in 1972.

O-G board, construction firm to arbitrate claim

Settlement of a long-simmering dispute between the Owendale-Gagetown Board of Education and the firm that coordinated construction of its high school addition is now up to the arbitrators.

Construction Coordinators Inc. (CCI) of East Detroit, which presumably could have filed suit, instead took its dispute to the American Arbitration Association (AAA).

It claims or claimed that it is owed \$81,871 for over-seeing bidding by contractors and construction in 1977-79. The project, finished in spring, 1979, consisted of a classroom addition and new gymnasium and conversion of the old gym into a cafeteria.

The position of the school board is that its contract with CCI called for it to be paid a flat \$108,000. Based on that amount, it still owes \$2,730.

The management firm claims the \$108,000 was based on it being on the job 12 months and the cost estimate of the building being \$1.33 million. Instead, it was there 17 months because of failure by the architects to get the plans to CCI in time and the final basic estimate was \$1.65 million. There were also some changes which required extra work.

All such deviations, it contends, were supposed to

be subject to an adjusted fee to be negotiated with the board.

The AAA hearing on the dispute was conducted by three referees Friday in Detroit and lasted six hours. They did not say when they will be making a decision, according to Owen-Gage Supt. Ronald Erickson.

The \$81,871 was the amount presented by CCI at school board meetings in August and September, 1979. Erickson didn't recall if that is the exact amount it requested at the hearing, but thought it was close. He also said that it was "kind of fuzzy," but by the end of the hearing, CCI was only asking for about \$35,000.

CCI President Carl Tropp declined comment, stating, "I just don't think it would be proper for me to comment while it is in arbitration."

At the September, 1979 meeting, he had offered a compromise of \$31,864, which was rejected by the board.

Both sides were represented at the hearing by attorneys, Owen-Gage's being William Fitzgerald of Lansing.

Also there in behalf of the district were Erickson, board President Ronald Good and architects Fred Wigen and Howard Kumbier of Wigen, Tincknell & Associates of Kalamazoo.

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11:00 Worship
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P.M. "The Golden Text On Prayer"

Rev. T. W. Teall, Pastor 872-3155
Mary L. Hanby, Church Worker 872-2888

Scholarships

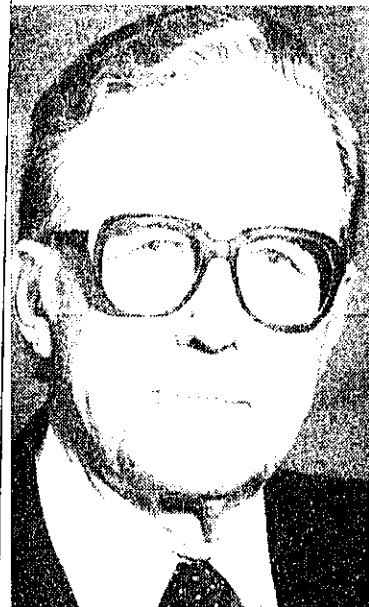
Scholarship aid totaling \$684,000 has been awarded to Alma College students showing intellectual promise and superior academic achievement.

Among the upperclass students awarded scholarships are sophomore Douglas Erla and junior Kim Hool of Cass City.

Douglas, a 1979 graduate of Cass City High School, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Erla, 6732 Main Street.

Kim, of 4656 Hunt St., is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hool, Windsor, Ont., and is a 1978 graduate of Assumption High School.

SPECIAL SERVICES AT



Lamotte

Missionary

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October

5-8

Coming to our community is a special guest in the person of Dr. Quinton J. Everest.

Quinton Everest served as pastor for thirty-eight years and was in his 22nd year at the Gospel Center Church in South Bend, Indiana, when he resigned July 1st, 1965, to devote full time to radio work and crusade evangelism. Also, "Your Worship Hour," a broadcast founded by Pastor Everest is now in its 47th year. Through a network of radio stations in United States, Canada, and other countries, millions of people are reached each week in many areas of the world.

Pastor Everest is listed in WHO'S WHO IN MID-WEST UNITED STATES, and also WHO'S WHO IN RELIGION IN AMERICA.

Pastor Everest served four pastorates and through these years has been engaged in church, camp meeting, and city-wide evangelistic campaigns, as well as ministerial conventions, etc.

You are cordially invited to attend these services which begin at 7:30 each evening from Oct. 5-8. A pre-service musical begins at 7:15 p.m. Monday thru Wednesday evenings. The Lamotte Missionary Church is located on M-53, 2 miles north of M-46.

Adv.

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