

# Earl And Lou Stresing

## Talented Couple Open Art Gallery In Greater Ivy

BY DEWEY MESSER

If art is the international language, then a husband and wife team of artists in Madison County can speak with just about everyone.

Lou and Earl Stresing are operating an art gallery in their home, displaying their careers' work in paintings, sculptures and collages.

The built their gallery onto their home last December and moved into their house four years ago.

"We chose the area for its peace, its tranquility and its nice people," Lou said.

Earl disagreed slightly. "We wanted to live in the Sun Belt, we wanted to still have four seasons but with shorter winters. We wanted lower taxes and heating bills."

The couple moved here from Long Island, N.Y., where Earl taught art at Sayville High School for 15 years. "I was the department head and had a high school, a junior high school and five elementary schools under me," Earl said.

His art education includes training at the Albright Art School in Buffalo, State University of New York at Buffalo, Columbia University T.C. in New York, Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. and at Lewis University in Glen Ellen, Ill.

Lou is originally from New Albany, Ind. She also received art training at Lewis University, as well as studying at Indiana University Southeast.

Lou and Earl met while learning from master sculptor Mustafa Naguib, the older brother of the Egyptian general, at Lewis University. They have been married for over six years.

Their gallery itself is a pleasure to walk through, viewing their work. It is well-lit by eight skylights, and the air is usually filled with classical music, which the couple say they like for its lack of lyrics and its soothing effect.

In talking with the Stresings, one thing becomes quickly apparent—they both are dedicated to cleaning up the environment, peace and open communications between people. Many of their art works carry these messages.

For example, Earl has done several paintings with an anti-littering theme. The series of three paintings, called "Keep America Beautiful," depict the litter caused by careless and callous beer drinkers.

Earl has another pro-environment work called "Toxic Waste", a collage done at the time when the toxic wastes first began to appear in Cherokee. When some talk started of a plan to build a toxic waste dump site here in Madison County, Lou organized a petition campaign against the plan. The petition drive gathered more than 1,000 signatures.

Their work is, by necessity, a time-consuming labor of love. "We figured out if we took into account all the hours we put into our work," Lou declared, "we would charge people something like \$20,000. As it is, we figure we make about 25 cents an hour. You have to love the work, and we do."

Speaking on the possibility of changing some of the things she doesn't like about the world, Lou said, "You just have to plant the seeds in peoples' heads. Not bad ones, just good ones."

"You know, in the sixties, they did change things, but it was...by riots and things. But these people, they try to change things by changing themselves, because that's all we really can change."

"This piece over here...represents all kind. There's a man and a woman and they're in separate worlds. They're real close and they try to join worlds. Every now and then we get close and we can communicate."

"Isn't this beautiful?" she asks, holding up a clipping of some snow-covered stones. "Mother Nature is so much better at art than we are."

The Stresings, like all artists, have several pieces in their private collection. One of the most interesting is Earl's self-portrait, which he made before he left teaching.

"It has things that I would like to see happen. Some of them have and some of them haven't."

The work is a combination of collage and painting techniques. At the top is an overlay of a brain—Earl's of course. The likeness of Earl has his heart and lungs visible in the chest area. He says he painted it this way



LOU STRESING as in the painting

### Photos by

because he is interested in health. The Earl in the painting painting the artist's signature in the middle right of the painting.

The work also has some things which Earl wanted in the future. Some of them are a motorcycle, good eating and living in either North Carolina or Virginia, all of which he has. He wanted a rural house, one which is in the same style as the one he has now. He wanted to lose weight, as a drawing of a scale showing 146 pounds shows (he now weighs very close to that goal).

He also wanted rural farmland scenes, a lot like where he lives now. He wanted an air compressor for his sculpturing, which he has. He wanted improved vision and hearing, which he says has partly happened. He wanted to have his works exhibited publicly, which has come true.

In the right lower corner of the work is a pile of coins. "That's money, but that hasn't happened yet," he laughs.

One interesting piece of Lou's is an untitled wood and metal-overlaid piece with wings and a snake. "The snake is a symbol of wisdom. It's really more of a symbolic creature. I don't know what to call it."



A TRADITIONAL WORK OF SCULPTURE, left, seems to consider the unorthodox alligator at right.

Lou said they often give each other pieces they like. "If he does something and I like it, he gives it to me. If I do something and he likes it, I give it to him. They're gifts," she said.

Other memorable works in their private collection are a wooden carving by Earl of a little girl, called "Curiosity", a painting by Lou called "Earth II" or "Mother Earth", some of Lou's stained glass windows and

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