

Thriving LV Artist

# Dream Comes True For Joyce Strauss



**ARTIST AND POET** — Local artist Joyce Strauss studies a 50 inch by 56 inch batik of Omar the Poet, one of the two thousand batik pieces Joyce has created in less than a year and a half. Batik is a series of wax writing and dye bath processes which results in the decorating fabric. [Times Photo]

By **ANDREA WALLER**  
Times Staff Writer  
It takes hard work and perseverance to rise from a "dreadful art student" to the designer of fabrics for the \$50 million Lowes Building of San Francisco.

But Joyce Strauss, art director and fabric designer for Marv Karnofsky Interiors, thrives on hard work.

Four years ago she dreamed about producing art forms.

But, through four-week beginner's art courses at UNLV, lots of how-to-do-it books and the ability to see the final product before she began, the 42-year-old woman's dreams became a reality.

She not only learned how to create tangible proof of her talents, but quickly discovered that her artwork could draw a price.

The brown-eyed blonde decided she'd earned the title "artist" when she "no longer was afraid of making mistakes."

As a successful artist, she strongly agrees with writer Virginia Woolfe's philosophy that "to be an artist, you must have someone to support you and a room of your own."

Her husband of 21 years, Neil, a local doctor, supports and houses her and their five

children in a sprawling ranch house in a posh west Las Vegas neighborhood.

"I love my environment," explains the Philadelphia-reared artist, "I seldom leave."

"Though I get calls and commissions almost everyday, I doubt I could support myself on my income," the vivacious woman says. "I've been spoiled by having someone provide me with the things I need and want."

"My husband is unique," she says, "he allows me the freedom I need to express myself and I in turn allow him the freedom he allows me."

A firm believer in organization, Mrs. Strauss keeps her supplies sorted and stored in her three workrooms at home.

Her house is modified to accommodate two workrooms — a storage area and workspace for her off-loom weaving and a bright and sunny studio for her neat crafts, including drawing, machine stitch embroidery, sculptural ceramics and sculptural crocheting.

Out back is a paneled work studio — a gift from husband Neil. The workshop, built specifically for pottery and baking, is equipped with phone, stereo, kiln, tub for dyeing fabric and all the necessary supplies. An inscription on the cement steps outside the door of the workshop reads: "From Neil To Me in '73."

She is best known for her work in batik, a process of writing with wax on fabric. Working in batik for less than a year and a half and producing some two thousand pieces, Mrs. Strauss has

created 750 batik T-shirts for boutiques in Las Vegas and California; designed one-of-a-kind fabric for local boutique Bricktop and Boris; designed wallpaper and fabric for the A.G. Spanos Office Building in Las Vegas, completed a multitude of tapestries for clients; and most recently, designed fabrics for walls, furniture, sheets, draperies, and clothing to be manufactured in limited editions for the \$50 million Lowes Building of San Francisco designed by Marv Karnofsky Interiors.

Although she spends at

least six hours a day working on projects, always juggling couple of pieces at a time, her first loyalty lies with her family.

The Strauss's five children ranging in age from 7 to 19 take tremendous pride in their mother's work.

"My family jumps in when I'm really busy," the former tap dancer explains. "They eat sandwiches or bring food for dinner and never make me feel guilty for not preparing dinner."

"I don't bug my children everything they do, they do it please themselves."

"Except for the two youngest," Mrs. Strauss continues, "all my children work. They cook and when it's the mood, they clean."

Though the five youngsters show an appreciation for art they are biased when it comes to mom's work.

Not so with husband, Neil.

"Neil, though not involved in art, is my severest critic and best friend," the smiling woman says.

Her positive relationship with her family comes after training herself to keep her expectations realistic and from living creatively.

During an eleven week creative living workshop she recently taught for adults Mrs. Strauss explained that "creative living" means making the most of every moment in a manner that pleases you as an individual.

She stresses that you don't have to be an artist to be creative — just do whatever you do with an extra bounce and always keep an eye open for something new and interesting.

The perky artist feels that everyone has the potential to live creatively, but unfortunately, many get caught in traps.

Mrs. Strauss has gone one step up on avoiding traps — she quit trying to impress others.

"There's no role-playing for me," Mrs. Strauss confides. "I'm happy as I am — I'm not in competition with anyone but myself."

And for someone whose mother once described her as a "dreadful art student," Mrs. Strauss has travelled a long way and can only go up from here.

"I feel this is only the beginning," she says, "wherever I go from here can't possibly be as good as where I am right now."

"Right now I'm getting enough attention to satisfy me," she says. "Anything after this is just frosting."



**BY THE TEASPOON** — Joyce Strauss works on her art projects in one of the three workrooms set up in her house. Her projects include designing and illustrating "The Great Las Vegas Coloring Book," a series of Hebrew educational

greeting and alphabet cards, developing and teaching the School of Creative Thinking, and completing two thousand pieces in batik. [Times Photo]

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