



— Staff photos by Bob Vin

In her legal-secretary work clothes, artist Ellen Irvine, above, discusses the merits of working part time to make ends meet. At left, she stands beneath a mural she did at Farmers Bazaar while butcher Dave Barnett cuts up an installment payment for the artwork — a frying chicken. Irvine is a Yale graduate.



— Staff photo

Mark Schweitzer waits tables at Saccio's Fish Factory while waiting for his career as a sculptor to bloom.



— Staff photo by George Smith

Vince Torano drives a school bus by day and works as a painter afternoons. Here, he helps a passenger.

"The time structure can be a problem because I like to create on a sort of free flow," said Schweitzer, who waits tables by day at Saccio's Fish Factory at the foot of Market Street.

"He (his boss) has allowed me to be on a non-regular schedule which allows me to fill in for other waiters," Schweitzer said. "Therefore, I know a couple days ahead what I'll be doing."

For Schuette, who subleases part of her 4,700-square-foot studio, the receipts from being a part-time landlord are buying time to be in the studio more.

"It makes it so I only have to work half-time at my other job as an administrator at Community Arts of San Diego," she said. "I hope some day that the building will pay for my time to do my own art, equalling the wage I would earn for a normal job."

Sigmund hopes his Alternative Space and 552 galleries will bring in extra money. He charges the artists who exhibit there only 10 percent commission in exchange for space.

"So far, I've only made \$50 on the two shows I've sponsored," he said. "But art is growing in San Diego. I don't think there's been a professional drive by a group of artists here locally. Through the efforts of Alternative Space, we're starting to organize and get something going downtown."

"It's a matter of desires. I want to be an artist and I want to paint for a living. It's hard. Right now, it just seems that I'm working from the minute I get up in the mornings until I go to bed at night. Except Sundays. I refuse to work on Sundays."

Besides his interior decorating, which calls for him to do a couple of residences a month, he estimates draperies for a Chula Vista upholstery firm. He said he went house-to-house in new subdivisions at first, drumming up interior-design work. When the home industry dropped off last year, he couldn't find work, so he started estimating draperies.

Irvine's strategy of doing secretarial work by day and painting by night is beginning to pay off.

After she painted a giant mural depicting a herd of Jersey cows on a building at Seventh and G streets, she came to the attention of local art critics and buyers. That brought her several other commissions, including one from Dave Barnett of Farmer's Bazaar to paint cuddly looking Hereford cows behind the counter of his Little Dave's Meat Market.

"I'm just beginning to take off, I think, because everything's working out so I don't have to work full time," Irvine said. "People are beginning to know who I am because of my work being around and (my) getting publicity."

"The whole thing centers on my keeping my bills paid. I have to earn X number of dollars a month to take care of myself and my children. Sometimes I sell a painting or two and that takes care of it. The amount of time I spend in an office working depends upon how much art I sell."

Lately, she's had to do outside work only two days a week. She works through the Pro Tem agency, which allows her to match her work to her needs. The rest of

the time, she usually can be found painting in her large studio at Eighth and E, located in a former Baptist church.

Things are looking up for minimal abstractionist Robin Bright of La Jolla, too. Bright said he is now selling at least one painting a month. "I'm on the brink of making a living in art," he said.

"I never felt that being an artist was going to be a bowl of cherries. I more or less accepted that I would have to work at other jobs. That doesn't bother me in the least bit. It's just something you have to do. You just do it, because the greatest reality is who's going to pay the rent."

Bright knows whereof he speaks. Now the chief preparator of the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, he began there last December as a janitor. "This is definitely a step up from that," he said. "There's not much thrill in cleaning the (toilet.)"

For those who are in the earlier stages of the struggle, there is always the hope of tomorrow.

"I think I do work as an artist all the time," said Barbara Sexton, who runs a gallery for Community Arts. "It doesn't mean I have to be producing art all the time. I mean I'm always thinking about it."

And said Vince Torano: "If one is working as a janitor or a school-bus driver, it might not seem so heroic, but I suppose in a crazy, romantic way, it is."