

Ann James Massey, Person of the Week



The artist, Ann James Massey.

by Cama Duke

Ann Massey never made it as a singer. Up until she turned nineteen, she hoped to become quite famous, but she was held back by one thing: she couldn't sing.

She could, however, draw.

At nineteen, she started drawing, and "never got out of it."

It's a good thing, because Massey has an uncanny eye for detail and a way of capturing people.

Growing up in El Paso, Massey comes

from a family of mostly engineers, and her flair for art would seem somehow out of place, except that the accuracy of her wax drawings betrays her heritage.

Some of her portraits are so carefully done, it is hard to believe they aren't black and white photos, except that most black and white photos just aren't that good.

Wax drawings are her main work, and she's won many awards for her pieces, although she admits that there is less competition, because it's an unusual medium.

She's now ready to take on greater competition, though, because she's begun working with paints, once she found a way to be as exact with the paints

ment to avoid stiffness.

With her new technique, Massey is now aiming for the national shows with her work, since up until now, she's mostly worked on commissioned portraits.

She has pursued her craft throughout her life, though most of the time she's held different jobs to support herself.

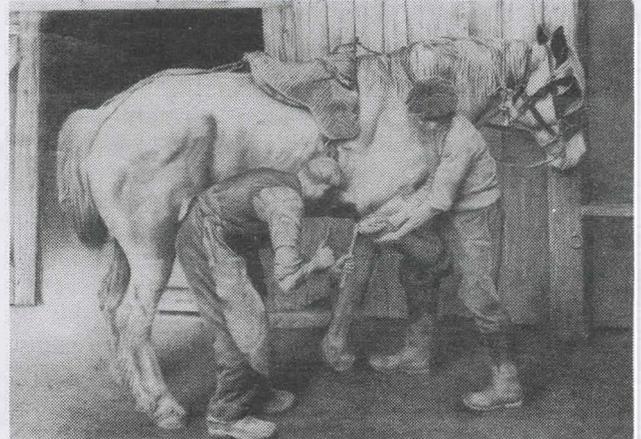
Her background is impressive. She studied art at the Art Academy and UTEP in El Paso; then studied further in Paris, Washington, and Baltimore.

In the meantime, she

a point, though, when she knew she had to get back to her art full-time. So she quit her job at the construction company and is finally doing what she's stayed with all along--her art.

And for now, she's concentrating on her own work, instead of commissions. She works in her studio at her home in Santa Teresa, an area she loves, because it's quiet and beautiful.

She has also gone back to teaching classes to bring in a lit-



"The Shoeing", a wax pencil drawing by Massey

also worked for many years as the vice president of construction at her brother's construction company.

Though she's managed to build a solid business resume, Massey has always been in-

tle extra income while she works on her art.

She enjoys teaching, she said, because she likes helping people learn how to look at their subject and find the details necessary to capture it on paper. Not everyone wants to draw as she does, she added, but she can teach them the basics so they can improve how they draw for

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Ann James Massey

as she could with wax pencils.

For both kinds, Massey said she plans the picture out exactly before she begins.

For painting, she then uses an old master's technique of grinding her own paints, which makes it much finer than paints in tubes. Then she mixes her own medium with black oil and a specific blend of linseed oil to make it gel.

Then she paints her pictures in tiny layers, like glazing, and when she's done, the light bounces off each layer like panes of glass.

Because she is so careful with her planning and details, Massey explained, she tries to make very loose drawings with move-

involved with art. At 22, she started her own art gallery, selling art and working on commission. She also offered 9 art classes a week to over 500 students.

She had to laugh when she described it. "At 22, you think you can do anything!" At that time, she had just started to learn about art, and sometimes she was just a week or so ahead of her students.

Apparently, though, she could do anything, because her gallery was a success until she decided to move on to further studies.

Since then, she's studied art, worked on her commissions, taught classes occasionally and held down jobs on the side.

She recently reached

themselves.

Her classes cost \$40 a month for one two and 1/2 hour class a week. They are held at the Santa Teresa Fire Department, and a portion of the costs goes to the fire station. Most of her classes have about five people, but she works with each student individually.

Massey also believes it's important for her to continue teaching, because that way she can continue learning.

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For information about Massey's classes, call 589-1661.