



Baxter Geeting

It's hard to place Maija Woof Peeples in a category.

Her lifestyle is almost conventional. Happily married. Capable and contented homemaker. "I really feel no discrimination," she laughs when queried about Women's Lib. "I just prefer to stay home, keep house, and make art."

It's when you invade her art world that Peeples escapes classification.

You could say her art — her sculpture, painting, printmaking, clay work, crocheting and various other media products — is based on pure fantasy. Her "Beasties" as she calls them that dominate practically all of her art seem right out of her very own dreamworld. But fantasy doesn't quite cover. Peeples, as she explains when you ask, researches her animal forms in ancient encyclopedia and academic tomes. She will pull from her library a worn volume and point to the very beast she has discovered and on which she has built her latest "Beastie." Of course, the Peeples' Beastie gives the encyclopedia forefather an entirely new character and is apt to be called something like a Llama Lamb, a Wallaby Walrus or a Buffalo Bee.

Peeples, born in Latvia in 1942, but a resident of the U.S. since she was nine, has had nine one-artist shows. She has appeared in over 25 group shows in the United States and in such distant places as London, Japan, and Brazil. She is featured annually in the Candy Store Gallery in Folsom and has been covered in such prestige periodicals of the art world as *Art in America*, *Art and Artists*, *Craft Horizons*, *Ceramics Monthly*, *Art Forum*, *Art News* and *Progressive Architecture*.

The Peeples' home and garage in the El Dorado hills constitute her extensive workshop. Every room is packed with variations of Peeples' Beasties and what she calls her "Visions."

"I have Visions," she admits slyly, her wide set eyes closing to some inner world she is not just quite ready to share with you, yet.

"I know what I'm going to make a long time in advance," she points out. "I'm motivated by my Visions."

"I keep thinking of things in animal

# Maija Woof Peeples: creations from dreams

By Corinne Geeting



forms. I concentrate very hard, close my eyes, and get it as a sculpture or a painting or something else in one of the other media I use, like crochet or clay. Yes, I visualize ahead what I make, physically. And I never depend on accident at all for my results. It takes me about three months to do a complete painting."

She admits to occasional failures. "Failures don't meet up to the Visions I have," she explains. "Even if people say, 'That's a good painting,' and it doesn't measure up to my Vision, I won't keep it or sell it, because it hasn't come up to what I thought it should be."

Peeples' paintings, like the rest of her art works, are colorful, completely original. In painting, she frequently uses glitter. Commercial glitter trailed over the bright acrylic paint on her canvases, has become almost her trademark. But she resists depending on it. She likes incorporating "extra things" she says, but has painted many of her canvases without glitter and the extras.

Clay work is one of Peeples' new projects. She has made literally hundreds of imaginatively decorated pots which defy all laws of conventional pottery craft. She fashions them all by hand, eschewing the use of a potter's wheel. Apparently, she never wedges her clay or pays the least bit of attention to the rules of drying to avoid cracking, etc. She fires her pots in her

own kiln — with a minimum of loss in cracking and with beautiful bright glazes sparkling on the flowers and Beasties covering her pots.

For her start in clay, Peeples credits David Gilhooly of Davis, who gave her a roasting pan full of clay as a thank-you for a stuffed turkey she had prepared for him and his family on the birth of the Gilhooly child.

"He told me to see what I could do with the clay, so I made a Son of a Beast: a sunburst with little beasts coming out of it," she recalls. He said, "Gee, that's good," and that's how I got started with clay."

Although she is not the typical academic product, Maija Woof Peeples holds a B.A. and an M.A. in art from the University of California at Davis, and she has taught at Sierra College in Rocklin, Laney College in Oakland, and on extension for U.C. Davis.

"But I am not teaching now," she says with satisfaction. "I'm just working 24 hours a day on art. We enjoy grinning at it, my husband and I, but I really like sharing it. That's why I am always getting ready for another show somewhere — to share my Visions."

If one were to come up with a great title for Maija Woof Peeples, whose motivating Visions are more than met by her total dedication to art and the creative life, it might be "*California's Joan of Art*." Her art works are true originals. And so is she.