Sculpture to enjoy from the car is the brainchild of Mildred Friedman who has been innovating through art most of her life. These are colorful and easily seen from either side of Telegraph.

Sculptor lines up her troops

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: DICK KELLEY

When the new west side section of Telegraph, south of 13 Mile opens, drivers will be treated to some unusual public art.

On her property that borders the new road, Mildred Friedman has constructed 37 wood sculptures that she likes to call “my troops.” Brightly painted, each one in the row stands as an individual achievement, different from the others, but still part of the attractive total.

Rather than found sculpture, Mrs. Friedman’s troops are more scrap sculpture or challenge sculpture.

For many years, the artist, painter, sculptor and fiber worker, has been buying from one lumber yard. She asked if she could collect and carry away the scraps at the end of the week. That’s what the 37 sculptures are made of, the odds and ends of the lumber yard. But, they work very well, because Mrs. Friedman is a trained artist and art teacher who can put the pieces together with a flair and a balance that is appealing.

IN ONE, SHE EVEN USED a small discarded window frame and even added a hint of a roof over it.

She walked down the 100 foot row of the works, which she started about February, and said, “I feel money because it’s all over.”

The project began when she was looking for new challenge. Mrs. Friedman is the type of artist who likes to move on once she has pursued one idea or one medium in depth. Consequently, she’s an invertebrate experimenter — a person who enjoys departing from the traditional.

She built the outdoor sculptures, one by one, in her studio at 16009 Livernois in Detroit. When the idea to glue them together didn’t work, she switched to nails. Each was transported to the back yard of the Franklin home in the back of a station wagon. Each also was given a coat of paint in the yard — red, blue, yellow, black or white. Just to add to the fun, there’s one dark green one in the middle of the row and a blue-purple at the end.

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Mr. Friedman helped his artist-wife by taking over the responsibility of anchoring them securely to two by fours under ground.

“THEY’RE MY PEOPLE,” Mrs. Friedman said. “The people working on the road come over and ask me what these things are that look like people.”

She thought for a moment and then added, “I still believe that while they are fun, they are good forms and good design. I’m a compulsive worker and I do a lot of work quickly.”

Not only is she a compulsive and prolific worker, Mrs. Friedman is versatile.

When Jim Hale of the Artists Group represented her (he has since moved to Florida to start a new business), he had many requests for landscapes. Mrs. Friedman accommodated with many landscapes, which sold fast.

She stood in her back yard looking at the work going along on Telegraph and her sculptures which will be seen, or at least partially seen, by the motorist and wondered where she would find her next challenge.

And then, there was just a hint that there might be a much taller, more elaborate companion piece — a sort of leader for the troops.
THIS BACKYARD construction kept the artist busy for a month last summer. She decided to build a fort without knowing what the outcome will be.
Mildred Friedman relaxes in her backyard and wonders what she can do for an encore to fill the void created when she finished her roadside project.
Intuition And Magic Lead Area Artist Down New Paths

By CORINNE ABATT

Housing the work of Southfield artist Mildred Friedman in a modest home is like trying to keep an elephant in your broom closet. It simply doesn’t fit.

Mrs. Friedman, an artist of national reputation, is fast becoming crowded out of her home by her own productivity.

Mrs. Friedman has donated eight yards of painting to the Channel 56 auction which will be held at the Tel-Twelve Mall from May 16-22. Another painting is now on exhibit at Garleck’s Gallery, 1459 S. Woodward, Birmingham as part of the gallery’s war protest show.

“I like to go larger,” she says and she does. Large, quantities of brilliant color, dynamic sweeping strokes, innovative interpretation are everywhere in the house on 10 Mile Road that is the studio and home for Mrs. Friedman and husband, Hy who is a commercial artist.

HER FLOOR paintings, shown recently in a one-man show at the Birmingham Gallery, demand the visitor’s attention. These free-form creations of Latex rubber and acrylic resin, some almost 2 by 2 feet in size, some much smaller, are paintings to walk on, and sit on.

Everything in the house, with the exception of the undecorated piano, has felt her impulsive touch. There are two conversation piece chairs in the living room that look as though they are covered with bubbly black tar.

In truth, the artist used an expensive, flexible plastic, poured over the metal frames and left to form.

Mrs. Friedman describes herself as an “intuitive artist.”

“I don’t plan anything; I just let it happen.”

The basement, combined work studio and storage space is almost like the atmosphere of a carnival funhouse. In one corner is the 12-sided mediation pod.

ONE CRAWLS in through a large round hole to find an inside montage of newspapers and pictures with an finish that lights up under black light.

The originator refers to it as my think tank, my meditation pod.” It was made for a special light exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts that never materialized.

MANY OF MRS. FRIEDMAN’s works are done to be seen in the black light affect. As she begins to pull out samples from the basement’s staggering inventory, she says, “I would just adore having someone commission me to do strange interiors.”

She illustrates with a stack of vinyl floor tiles that have been spray painted and varnished. Under the black light they take on an eerie glow. About the time you wish you could see a whole floor put together, she shows her paintings by the yard — some lengths of material painted, enough to wrap a room or two.

For her dream of doing strange interiors, there is the 12-section painting, a five-section painting and many massive single paintings from various periods of the artist’s evolving career.

As she picks her way through the crowded basement, she points to samples of “my meditative period,” “my shaped canvas period,” “my figurative period.”

Obviously when Mrs. Friedman is turned on to a particular phase, she gives it everything until her appetite for it is sated.

TAKE LAST summer’s back yard project, for instance.

For a month from early morning to night, she did art povera in her yard. This is another way of saying that she went to the lumber yard every day, gathered all the scraps available and sawed, hammered, bolted and constructed to suit her creative fancy.

Granted, the neighbors were aghast as she crawled around and worked her way in and out of many a constructive maze.

They couldn’t understand because, as she explains, “Most of them think you have to have some useful purpose.”

She didn’t stop to analyze what was she was building, but she tells a tongue-in-cheek story on her effort.

One morning after she finished, a youngster came to the yard and asked seriously, “Is this a nursery?”

“Suddenly,” Mildred Friedman says “I realized what I had created—a nursery for an adult who is still a child.”

“Artists are like children,” she comments. “They still believe in magic —of a kind.”

THE ARTIST, who has both a BFA and MA degrees from Wayne State University teaches at Oakland Community College. She has had several one-man shows at Detroit galleries and at the Brafa Gallery and Gallery #4 in New York and has been in group shows from the Midwest and Israel to the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City.

Mrs. Friedman speculates that one of these days she might hold a huge auction as the art slowly works she and her husband out of the house.

It would doubtless be one of the most colorful, exciting and way-out auctions ever to hit the metropolitan area.
A SAMPLE of Mildred Friedman’s art of floor painting dominates the living room of her Southfield home.
GETTING AWAY from it all is easy for Southfield artist, Mildred Friedman, she crawls into her meditation pod.
FRIENDLY DOLL
Sits in the Southfield artist’s living room
INSIDE JOB
Mildred Friedman peers from magazine-lined duodecahedron
Southfield sculptor

Artist recycles world of plastic

By ILONA WEISSMAN
News Special Writer

Tell a woman to have her picture taken and she'll probably run to the beauty shop. Maybe she'll even splurge on a new dress.

Not Mildred Friedman. She simply grabs cans of fluorescent paint and sprays brightly colored designs on her clothes.

MRS. FRIEDMAN, a productive artist, uses materials like video tapes, electronic tubes, and polyurethane polymers to form the "creations" in her home.

She calls her Southfield residence a chamber of horror-type place. Every room, and the yard, is her "world of imagination."

Enter the living room and a shiny, black "octopus" creature greets you. It's made from 33 rolls of video tapes and hangs from the ceiling. Nearby are two black volcanic looking chairs, formed from poured polyurethane.

FLOOR RUGS are multicolored, free-form latex and acrylic paintings, meant to be walked on. They're "easy care" pieces which can be scrubbed with soap and water.

Articulate Mrs. Friedman says, "I recycle everything esthetically."

Pottery, masks, sculpture and her paintings are an important part of the decor. She has worked on many art projects and is constantly experimenting.

IN HER BASEMENT studio a large section of a vinyl tile floor is covered with fluorescent paint. There's a huge, many-sided box which she calls a "think tank-meditation tank." It has plenty of room inside to relax.

Hundreds of Mrs. Friedman's paintings are stacked against walls and to describe them, it's almost necessary to write in color. They represent years of hard work.

Some are separate panels meant to be hung together. Paintings that only a large commercial lobby would hold. Others are more modest in size.

"IN INDIA," says Mrs. Friedman, "there's a proverb when applied to art. 'All artists on judgment day are required to give their paintings life.'"

The Oakland Community College assistant professor, who's "always been an artist—it's a habit with me," won a national poster contest in Canada when she was eight years old. Prior to her marriage, she was a commercial illustrator.

Currently, Mrs. Friedman is preparing to transport all her work to the Shenandoah Golf and Country Club ballroom for what she calls "Mill's Paint Out." It's planned Sept. 19.

She admits "I'm way overstocked and must sell some things to raise money for more materials."
Southfield sculptor

Artist recycles world of plastic

LEFT: What looks like the aftermath of a volcanic eruption is a chair which artist Mildred Friedman covered with polyurethane foam.

RIGHT: Attired in spray painted fluorescent work clothes, Mildred Friedman surrounds herself with an octopuslike creature she created from 33 rolls of used video tape.

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