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EDUARD HEIJMANS TALKING

■ Ask Eduard Heijmans who's the greatest living artist and he'll probably tell you Eduard Heijmans. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he'll step down and hand the throne over to Picasso. But the 56-year-old Amsterdam painter is convinced of his own talent nevertheless, and many museums and art critics have been inclined to agree with him.

Following his first and only one-man in the US, at the Miami Museum of Modern Art, the response was so great the museum decided to open an entire room permanently devoted to his work. Still, he says: "My dream is to be invited to exhibit in a big New York art gallery. Problem is you usually have to pay for this sort of exhibition and I just haven't got that much money. It would have to be a sponsored showing." And he won't rest till he gets it.

Heijmans, whose brilliant oil colours usually cover expansive canvases, insists that works titled *Night Phantoms*, *Dance of Salome*, *Unmarried Mother* and *Byzantine Triptik*, among others, are not fantasies. "These things are real for me and painting is my world of expression. I can think months about a painting. Finally I'm ready. Without making any sketches at all, I get down to work applying brush to canvas and I don't stop till it's finished — usually just a matter of a few hours.



AT WORK: PAINTING IS MY WORLD OF EXPRESSION

After that I feel completely drained."

Still his prices fall within the "attainable" category — between \$200 for a smaller canvas to \$2,000 for four-by-six-footers. Only one large painting, of a Roman mummy, which Heijmans' highly favours at the moment, has a

\$3,000 price tag. One of the 'mono-type' prints — a technique which Heijmans perfected in 1966 using 17th century style paper made especially for the artist in an old paper mill — can be purchased for under \$100. Many works come complete with a Heijmans poem, for he is a poet as well and has already had four volumes published.

Heijmans' background is as colourful as his canvases. He was born in Utrecht. His father, an art history teacher and amateur cellist, decided that young Eduard should learn to play cello as well, and lessons began when the boy was six. He pursued this career for a while but also went to technical school in Germany, fought in Israel in 1935, drifted off to South America for a while and finally wound up as an art dealer with a wife and daughter and home in Aerdenhout, near Haarlem. "I was a real rolling stone.

"For relaxation I painted at home in the attic. My wife saw something in my work and convinced me I should paint full-time. By then I was 44."

Sandberg, the former director of the Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, took an interest in Heijmans' work and helped him get started. In 1957 the artist had his first small exhibition, but others soon followed in the Stedelijk as well as in museums and galleries throughout Holland and in galleries in Italy, Switzerland, London, Paris and finally Miami. At present he is exhibiting at Heinekens gallery in Amsterdam.

"I started late so I had to work like hell. Now my paintings are in galleries or private collections as far off as Australia and Curaçao."

After 26 years of marriage and one near fatal heart attack, Heijmans divorced his wife and married pretty Nuray Atas, 26, a Turkish art student. The couple now live in an Amsterdam studio piled high with canvases. Heijmans never wrote happy poems before but his most recently published book describes his feelings about Nuray. "I'm sure it will be a best seller," he says. "Young people are very romantic these days."