

# arts & entertainment

## Sculpting

### Claremont artist carves his niche

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Correspondent

Gerd Untermann is a man in love with his work.

A master craftsman in wood, the Claremont resident can design and create everything from intricately patterned flooring, made from a variety of exotic woods, to ornately carved armoires and kitchen cabinets.

At present he is working on a sculpture of 12 year old Alanna Gillis, who is visiting the family from Mount Albert. Although the facial features have yet to be carved, the likeness is already striking.

When Untermann is sculpting from life, he prefers to get to know his subjects first.

"The physical likeness is incidental," observed Untermann.

"It's the person inside that shines through."

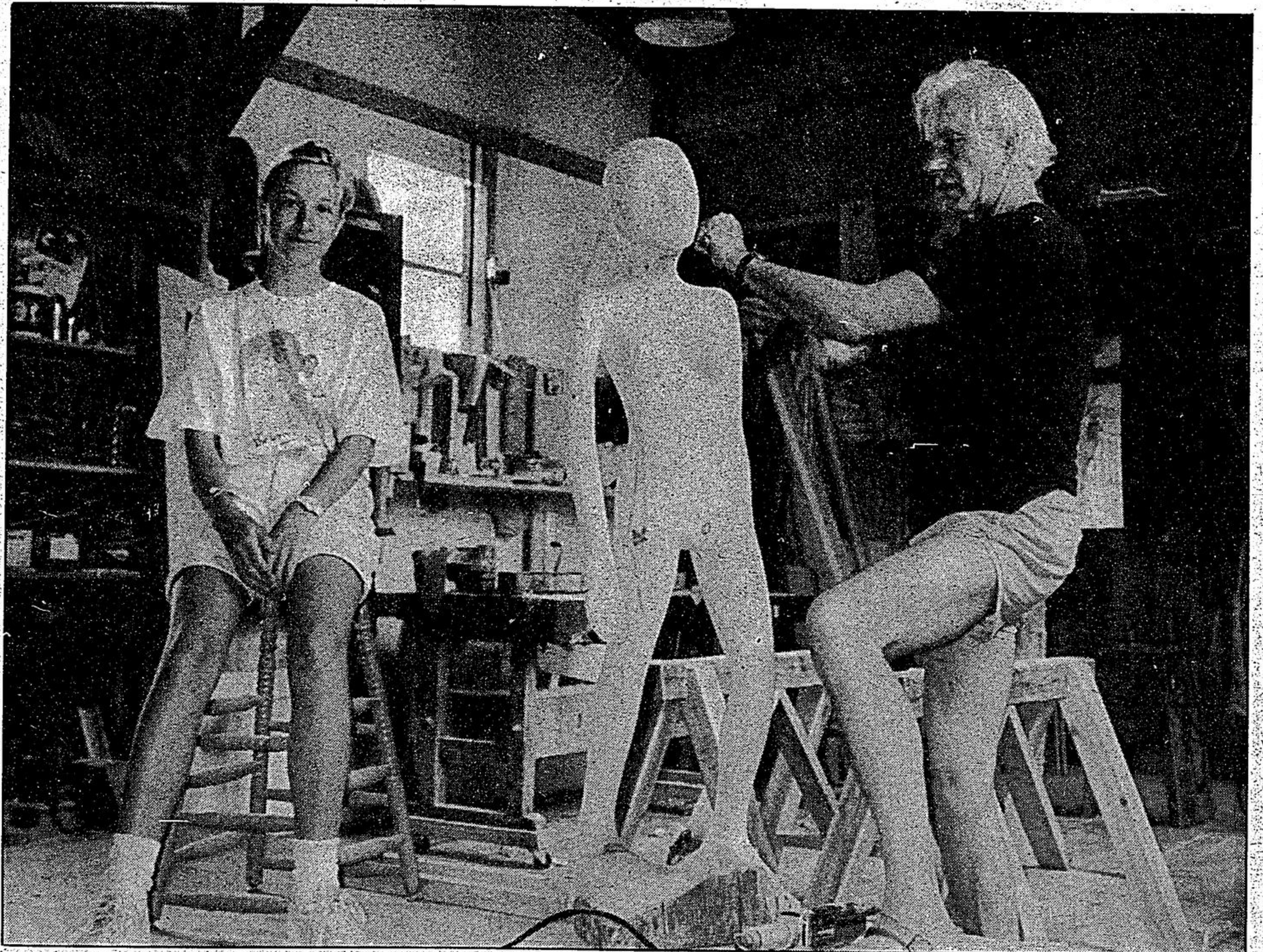
He received his formal training in his native Germany. "I had an apprenticeship in Berlin in a very proper furniture shop."

Each piece he made was individually crafted from drawings for specific clients.

When Untermann came to Canada, he worked in a variety of areas, including construction and renovation, "but I prefer to do things that require imagination," he noted.

His fascinating portfolio includes whimsical dining chairs which incorporate huge carved sunflowers into the design and a painstaking replica of an intricately carved door for a 13th Century armoire.

"One door was missing, now there are two again," he said. "I made the new door in the



Photo/CELIA BRONKHORST

Sculptor Gerd Untermann of Claremont works on his latest work, a likeness of Alanna Gillis, 12.

same construction as the old."

Using the remaining door

At one point an architect walked by and said to me, 'you're extinct.

People like you don't exist anymore'

~ Gerd Untermann.

as a guide, Untermann faithfully reproduced the carving of a scene from Aesop's

Fables, which features a wolf with a miller in the background.

The result is remarkable - the restoration of an heirloom - with the new door indistinguishable from the old. To Untermann, however, it's all part of a day's work.

"It was fun," he said, with a cheerful shrug.

"At one point an architect walked by and said to me, 'you're extinct. People like you don't exist anymore.'"

Despite his puckish sense of humor, Untermann is never satisfied until he achieves exactly what he sets out to do.

When he works with his clients, it's a collaborative effort.

"It's definitely a working together to achieve that which the customer imagines, but has never been able to realize," explained Untermann.

"It's not always quick and it's probably more costly than Ikea," he added with a grin.

"This is where the craft comes in - it's something done with love and care for somebody who loves it and cares for it. Everybody wins."

He has built houses, he said, "real houses, where the

hurricane can come and it doesn't move," but clearly it's the artistic element of his work which most appeals to him.

Untermann has just finished working on a store in the St. Lawrence Market, "and right now I am being asked to come up with a new vision for an apartment in Harborfront."

As with all his projects, it promises to be an absorbing and rewarding task, both for him and his client.

Untermann has his own company, Harvest Woodworking, and can be reached at 649-2433.

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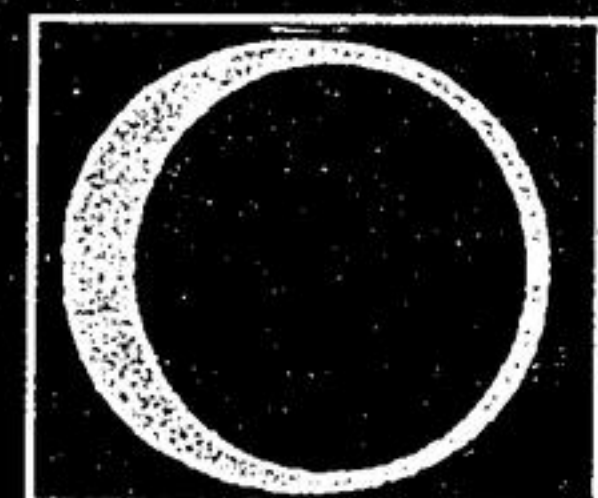
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