

DOCTOR IN THE STUDIO

This neurologist's creative journey goes from painting to mixed media sculpting

BY MARVIN ROSS

IT SEEMS appropriate for the curator of the Minneapolis Institute of Art to say that the work of Dr. Audrius (Andy) Plioplys "caused a fire in my mind." However, the curator was not referring to Dr. Plioplys' work as a pediatric neurologist or to his work as a neurological researcher but to his artistic endeavors.

Dr. Plioplys, a 35-year-old native Torontonian, has managed to successfully combine two seemingly disparate pursuits—neurology and art. At one point, the two endeavors were creatively combined. While doing his residency at the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Plioplys spent some time producing studies entitled "Thinking of Raphael" and "Thinking No Thoughts." Each of these works is an EEG tracing of the artist/neurologist.

Dr. Plioplys, who is currently on staff at the Hospital for Sick Children and doing research in the neurobiology of Down's syndrome and CNS damage from childhood neurological conditions at Surrey Place Centre, first began painting at the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago. During his internship in Madison, Wis., in 1976, Dr. Plioplys decided that "there was nothing creative about doing a general medical internship and so I started painting on weekends or whenever I wasn't on duty." When he completed his internship, Dr. Plioplys moved to Washington to pursue art full time.

Dr. Plioplys' artistic endeavors soon turned from painting to mixed media sculpture using materials that he found in the streets and alleys of Washington. During this period, Dr. Plioplys began to make a name for himself in juried and group exhibitions. After three years, however, he decided to

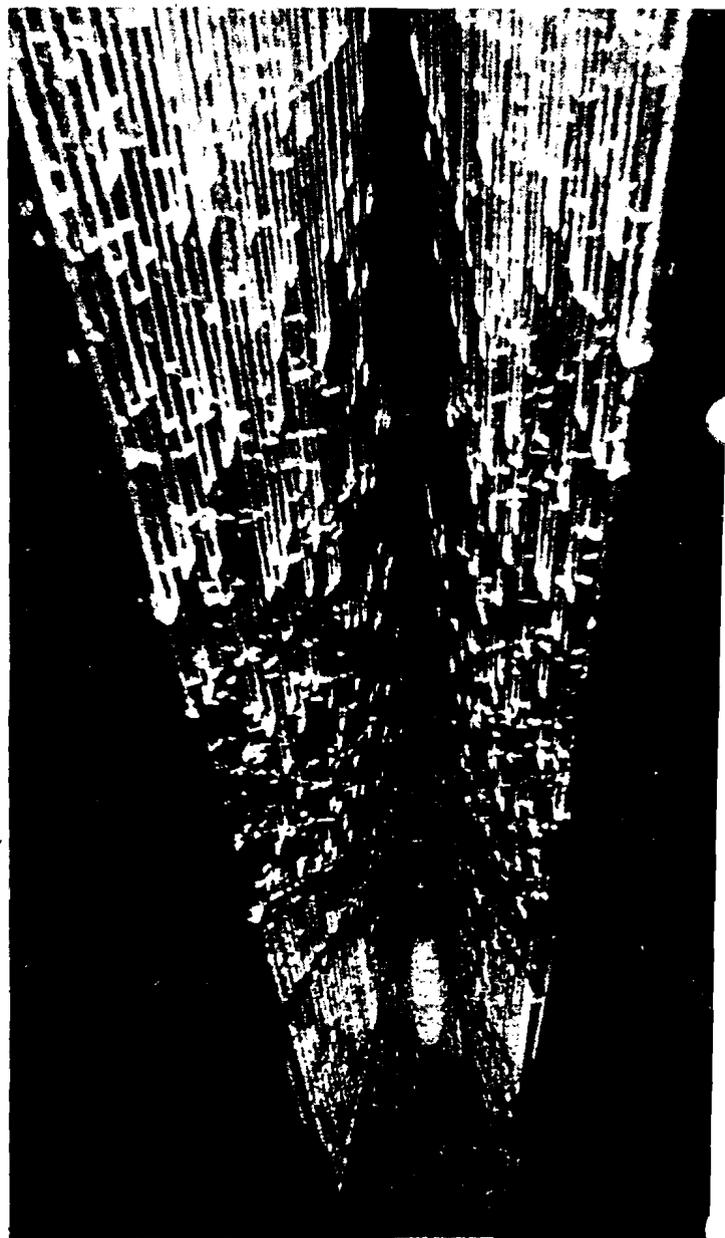
return to medicine when it became apparent that it was very difficult to make art a full-time pursuit. He was accepted into the residency program at the Mayo Clinic.

Dr. Plioplys continued with his art and has had numerous one-man and group showings of his works in Chicago, Virginia, Maryland, Toronto, Washington, Rochester, N.Y., Minneapolis, Duluth, New York City, Belgium and Quebec City.

In addition to the very favorable comment from the Minneapolis curator, others have been just as glowing in their praise. Ivan Karp of the OK Harris Gallery in New York described the art of Dr. Plioplys as "the most original work I have seen." Harold Haydn of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said that Dr. Plioplys was "blessed with a splendid imagination," while a Washington critic stated that he has "a metaphysical mind."

Dr. Plioplys has no trouble reconciling two seemingly different pursuits. He explained to The Medical Post that neither his research nor his clinical work is artistic but that everything fits together in a general sense. "Looking after children and doing research," he said, "are humanitarian. Similarly art is a humanitarian concern because you are creating things that are esthetically pleasing. Even though the specifics of the three are not the same, they are all humanitarian."

Of late, Dr. Plioplys' work has been slowed down by the presence of two children aged four and two. "My kids," he said, "are my current living sculptures." However, in addition to the "living sculptures," Dr. Plioplys is managing to do some sketching and drawing and plans to take a month away from medicine this year to devote exclusively to art.



MIRRORED DOORWAY

Photos: Vytautas P.