

Portfolio

With the rise of the potential movement in all its variations and with mobility an accepted part of the fabric of American life, people no longer feel obliged to stay on one job for years, hiding their dissatisfaction behind a smile as they're awarded their 25-year pin. Making the move from unsatisfying work to more satisfying work — or even to none at all — often takes a lot of nerve and a lot of imagination. Here, by Star Staff Writer Mary Ellen Butler, are the stories of three people who took that risk.

By the time he finished med school at the University of Chicago in June, 1975, art had become the primary interest in his life.

Turning to art had nothing to do with Plioplys' medical skills. A better-than-average student, he'd received five fellowships for advanced study in his chosen speciality; was a teaching assistant and had published an article in the Journal of Applied Physiology, all before completing his internship.

"But there was nothing creative about doing a general medical internship," Plioplys says. "I starting painting on weekends or whenever I wasn't on duty."

Once having made the decision, Plioplys came to Washington where he and Geri Critchley, an employee of a student travel organization, were married and where he pursued art full-time, living on savings he'd accumulated during his internship.

For someone with no art training, Plioplys' work, tending toward three-dimensional structures, utilizing rec-

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warned two years ago by doctors that if he voluntarily stepped out, it would be hard to get back in."

But luck was with Plioplys once he made the decision. He was accepted at the famed Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., as a resident for the summer of 1979, where he hopes to resume research in pediatric neurology.

Actually, Plioplys' interests in art and medicine both tend toward the theoretical. He'll continue doing "installation pieces," works of art that are so big they have to be permanently installed.

"The type of art I want to do will be easier now that my financial status will be eased," Plioplys says.

Along with the easing of financial burdens has come an easing of emotional ones.

"I feel better about myself now," he says. "Art plays a very important role in society, but there has to be a balance between personal creativity and the needs of society at large," needs Plioplys feels he'll be helping meet by going into medical research.

The artist is back inside the white coat, but is now assured of its place

After a brilliant showing at the University of Chicago Medical School, Audrius "Andy" Plioplys was finishing his internship in Madison, Wis., in June, 1976, and was on the threshold of specializing in neurology, when the artist inside his doctor's white coat finally pushed its way forward.

"During my internship I often went running," Plioplys says. "One sunny day near the end of that year, I stopped and looked at the sky and the clouds. I said to myself, 'What did I do here other than be a smart aleck, when what I really wanted to do was express myself in a personal manner?'"

In that moment, Plioplys says now, he decided to quit a promising medical career and do what his heart told him: artwork.

"My interest in art had been growing for quite a while," says Plioplys, 26, who maintains a studio in his apartment on Wyoming Avenue NW.

"I STARTED PAINTING in medical school during my spare time."

PLIOPLYS

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tangular and square shapes, cracked mirrors and other "conceptual" ideas, has met with favorable critical response.

"The visual aspects are one thing, but the important aspects are the ideas, ideas that for men tend to go along philosophic and psychological lines. The mirrors, for example, are objects of revelation, reflection and insight, ideas it may be difficult for laymen to understand."

But selling enough pieces to make a living is a different story.

"My art hasn't been commercial, the market just isn't there," Plioplys says, noting that just a handful of Washington artists are able to pursue their professions full-time. Most teach, but he didn't want to.

THAT HARD REALITY led to Plioplys' decision in May to return to medicine, a move his wife thought would be difficult to execute. "Medicine is a very conservative profes-



andy plioplys

From neurological researcher to sculptor