



Joni Mitchell ... folk singer capable of artistry with song or paintbrush.

Joni takes look at rug 'drawings'

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Joni Mitchell weaved her way through the crowded floor of the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts to a spot where she could take a good close look at the two multi-colored rugs hanging from the white brick wall.

"This is the first time I've seen them finished," she said. "They are an exact literal translation of my drawings."

Miss Mitchell, known more for her artistry with a song than a paintbrush, was one of several artists represented by a display of rugs unveiled Tuesday night at the museum.

What happens is the artist submits a painting which is given to rug weavers who in turn convert the painting into a huge rug. The majority of the rugs on display are in muted browns, blacks and greys. Miss Mitchell's stands out from the rest because of the bright colors she used.

"The one on the right," she said, "represents the journey. See those beige lines. There's a full line, then another full line, then a broken line, a full line and a broken line.

"That line up the middle represents the avenue we all have to travel on and the red lines in the background is the mountain we all must try to climb."

A small man came up behind Joni and tapped her on the shoulder. She turned.

"Arturo," she smiled and hugged him.

"This is the master weaver," she said, introducing the man responsible for converting the drawings into the rugs that hung from the giant wall.

Miss Mitchell carried a Polaroid camera under her arm. It was one of the new type — the kind that gives you a colored picture without your having to mess with those sticky chemical-filled film packets. She took Arturo over to her rugs and took a couple of pictures of him with her camera.

"The one on the left," she said, resuming her description of her paintings, "just represents a hawk and a coyote. In traveling through the West I saw a lot of hawks and I heard a lot of coyotes."

Miss Mitchell has spent a lot of time lately just traveling around, recording her impressions of America on notepads and sketch books. A recent journey brought her to Fort Worth at the same time Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Review was playing in the city.

Joni joined Dylan on stage for a couple of songs that night and stayed in the same hotel with the Rolling Thunder entourage. Sometime during that stay, her portfolio containing her notebooks and sketchbooks was stolen.

She offered a reward for the return of the items. But, she said Tuesday, she never got them back.

"Oh, we got a lot of crank letters, but nothing substantial," she said. "I never really thought I would get them back. But I had to make the try. I really wanted them returned."

Joni Mitchell doesn't like to be interviewed. She has been burned several times, she claims, by persons who have taken her words out of context. The way to stop all this, she believes, is just not to grant interviews.

But she seemed willing to talk about her artwork, something available to the public prior to this only through her record album covers.

"This show has been going on for three years now," she said of the Dallas Museum's rug display. "I've been asked to take part in the last two of them.

"It's really amazing to see something you've drawn like these two paintings and see them enlarged like this," she said. "They're exactly the way I painted them, only larger. The colors are exactly right."

The rugs by Joni Mitchell and the other artists will be on display at the Dallas Museum through Dec. 26.