

Here's a list of best-of- summer reading

I LOVE to go into bookstores and ask the staff what books they've read and loved lately. It's like asking a friend, only better, because bookstore people read as if life depends on it. And maybe it does — professionally speaking, that is.

But that is not to say they're not inclined to push their favorites. Of course they do — zealously. That's what makes bookstore visits so much fun. They'll synopsize the entire plot of a favorite novel before you blink an eye, though they never, never tell the ending. They'll introduce you to an author you've never heard of and give you 10 good reasons why you should read that person. If they like a particular book, they'll try to steer you someone who did like it. And, if nobody liked it, they'll tell that too.

They're the Sixakis and Eberts of the book world.

So this week I asked the staff of several local bookstores to give us their recommendations for some



book break
Mona Grigg

good summer reading. Here's what they had to say:

Birmingham Book Store owner-manager Gere Freedman recommends "Life and Death in Shanghai" by Nien Cheng. "An exceptional book by an exceptional woman," says Freedman, who met the author at a book luncheon. Freedman says to watch for three exceptional books due out later this summer (she was lucky enough to read advance copies): "Blings" by Rita Mae Brown; Ann Tyler's latest, "Breathing Lessons"; and "Silence the Lamb," a psychological thriller by Thomas Harris.

SADALLE HESSLER recom-

mends her favorite, Michael Dorris' "Yellow Raft on Blue Water" (Gere Freedman says Hessler has probably sold hundreds of copies of this book by convincing everybody they'll love it as much as she does — and so far there are no complaints.) Hessler also loved "Sarum" by Edward Rutherfurd (out in paperback now). Jeanne Nielson loves "Cold Sassy Tree" by Olive Ann Burns and Clyde Edgerton's "Walking Across Egypt." (Edgerton has a new one coming out soon called "The Flat Plain Notebook" and there are whole lot of us who can't wait.)

Everybody at Birmingham Books recommends Scott Turow's "Pre-

sumed Innocent" and Pat Conroy's "Prince of Tides." Freedman says people are also buying James Michener's "Alaska" and Stephen King's "The Gunslinger" on cassette to listen to while driving.

BORDERS BOOK STORE (Birmingham) manager Tim Gable can't say enough about "Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?" a philosophical study by Alasdair MacIntyre.

Assistant manager Don Powers is pushing "Lion Country" by Frederick Buechner and "The Philosophy of Schopenhauer" by Bryan Magee.

Rod Miller, also an assistant manager, recommends Jean Cocteau's "Diary of an Unknown" (in hardcover) and "Song for Mumu" by African writer Lindsay Barrett.

Staffer Sylvia Inwood loved "Tales of the City" from Armistead Mauphi's "City" series, and "Clorinda" by Michael Moorcock. She also recommends Marge Piercy's "Available Light."

Bill Morrissey stands by "Mon-sieur" by Lawrence Durrell, "Rebel Angels" by Robertson Davies, and "The Good Apprentice" by Iris Murdoch.

Terry McKenzie likes "Wide Sargasso Sea" by Jean Rhys, "Grass Fires" by Michigan writer Dan Gerber, and "Scenes from the Home-front" by Sara Vogan (hardcover).

Gregg Heinrichs recommends Lawrence Durrell's "Pope Joan," Tom Robbins' "Another Roadside Attraction," and Graham Greene's "Monsignor Quixote."

New staffer Van Hubner liked "Pi-casso" by Ariana Stansopolis Huff-ington.

BARRY POUPARD selects Jim Harrison's "Dalva," "Love in the Time of Cholera" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and also recommends Dan Gerber's "Grass Fires."

I Browse (West Bloomfield) manager Amy Greenstone liked "Love in the Time of Cholera" by Marquez.

Also, "The Two Deaths of Seneca Puccini" by Stephen Dobyns, "Oscar and Lucinda" by Peter Carey, and Carrie Fisher's "Postcards from the Edge."

Virginia Ventke liked Garcia Marquez' "100 Years of Solitude," as well as Louise Erdrich's "The Beet Queen." Anne Tyler's "Accidental Tourist," and "Nora," Brenda Mad-dox's biography of Nora Joyce, wife of James.

John Huston and Joe Park both liked "Housekeeping" by Marilyn Robinson. Huston was stunned by Elie Wiesel's "Night."

Thumbs up from everyone for Conroy's "Prince of Tides." Other favorites include "The Handmaid Tale" by Margaret Atwood, "The Princess Bride" by William Gold-man, and "White Palace" by Glenn Savan.

Next column: staff recommendations from Little Professor in Farmington; Little Professor-in-the-Park, Plymouth; Metro News in Canton.

Feigenson/Preston Gallery opens in Birmingham

By Manon Melgaard
special writer

Mary Preston, director of the Feigenson Gallery of Detroit which closed earlier this year, has opened the Feigenson Preston Gallery in Birmingham. With it she brings a stable of artists whose questioning, challenging work made the Detroit gallery famous.

The opening exhibition is centered around Detroit-born Tom Bills, who has been making waves as well as sculpture in New York. He recently became affiliated with the old, established, prestigious Zabriski Gallery there. His five steel and lead sculptures have symmetry and grace that belie the toughness and industrial associations of the materials.

What Bills does is join thick, steel slabs together with a thin, winding incision that's been cut through them and then filled with molten lead.

This mutual dependency is necessary to the finished work as the relation between the two metals creates a balance of image and structure.

"The two materials, rely upon each other," said Bills, "the one cannot exist without the other."

The surfaces incorporate the natural scars of oxidized, rusty steel with linear or curving patterns of silvery lead. In some of the pieces he leaves open areas of space which add emphasis to the external and internal image.

The Bills exhibit continues through July 29. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 796 N. Woodward, Birmingham. The Wesner exhibit continues through Saturday, July 16. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 163 Townsend, Birmingham.

WOODWARD, BIRMINGHAM. The Wesner exhibit continues through Saturday, July 16. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 163 Townsend, Birmingham.

TOWNSEND, BIRMINGHAM.

THREE OF THE SMALLER sculptures are mounted on sturdy, but seemingly delicate bases while the two massive ground pieces are around average knee-height and weigh almost one ton apiece. In the balance between surface and depth, solidity and movement and the visible versus the invisible, these large sculptures seem to be oriented to something or somewhere below ground. They suggest antiquity — ancient tombstones that have grown into the ground or Viking, even Mycenaean, excavations.

After receiving a bachelor of arts degree from Oakland University,

Rochester, where he became an assistant to Kichi Usui, curator of the Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Bills joined an independent study program at the Whitney Museum, New York and later received a master of fine arts degree from Yale University.

The exhibition includes exciting new work by original Cass Corridor artists Bradley Jones, Robert Sestak, James Chatelain and Paul Schwarz and relative newcomers John Obuch, Diane Carr, Brad Iverson and Patricia Soderberg.

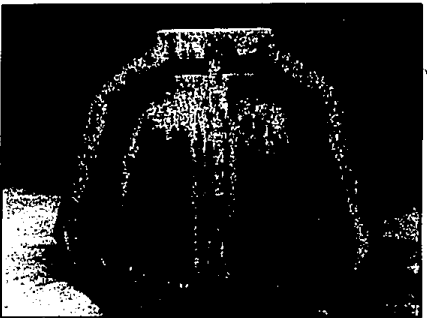
The Bills exhibit continues through July 29. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 796 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

JOSEPH WESNER'S NEW sculptures at Hill Gallery of Birmingham are graceful and sensuous with long, curving, gestural forms moving in a vertical direction.

Even the smaller works, about 2-foot high and up, assume varying different three-dimensional aspects within a strong, structure in-ground, figure relationship.

Whereas a plethora of elements once constituted the dynamics of Wesner's sculpture, he now emphasizes the gesture or mark (figure or figures). The work is more streamlined with the energy directed inside the sculpture.

Steel, marble, concrete or sandstone bases play an integral role in



"The Conventioneer" by Tom Bills is lead and steel. It is 25 by 29 by 9 1/2 inches and was made last year.

the composition. Wesner explained that the figure represents the theme of the ideal and reality and the large, sometimes three-tiered bases denote the solid reality of the earth.

Surfaces and patinas are sensitively treated — a greenish-blue bronze work looks as though it might have been dredged from the sea; an ivory-painted steel stands on its marble base like a modern abstraction of the Greek chorus and an unpainted

steel impresses with its ferrous, earthy red tones.

Appropos the ideal and reality, the artist explained the arching figures of the 8-foot high "Romance and Juliet IV" say more about the catharsis of youth than a hopeless love.

Wesner, who teaches sculpture at the Center for Creative Studies, often uses Shakespearean themes as a metaphor for his work. Many of Shakespeare's plays work well in a



While this sculpture isn't part of Joseph Wesner's show at Hill Gallery of Birmingham, it gives a good idea of the direction he is going. It is called "Tempus," is 8 by 11 by 4 feet and was done last year.

modern scenario — so do these sculptures.

The exhibit includes some vigorous drawings that stress the importance Wesner places on surfaces. The exhibit continues through Saturday, July 16. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 163 Townsend, Birmingham.

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