

Controversial sculpture gives students lessons in criticism

By Casey Hana
staff writer

Fifth graders at Wood Creek Elementary studied a controversial piece of artwork on Northwestern Highway this week, tying in recent lessons on urban perspectives and getting some local current events in the process.

"I see a building in a swamp," said one student, standing before the sculpture.

"I think he should have put it with the front towards the street," another added.

"It looks like a bunk of junk," exclaimed another.

The students were studying the "Covington" sculpture by Bloomfield Hills artist Michael Hall, who used his time living in Kentucky as an inspiration for his artwork.

The piece sits on the front lawn of a Farmington Hills office building at 30333 Northwestern Highway, in which the sculpture's owner, Gilbert Silverman, has his offices.

Students who biked from their school in the Wood Creek subdivision

to view the artwork also saw several pieces inside the Silverman offices as part of their art studies.

STUDENTS HAD recently completed a unit on urban perspectives where they designed model sculptures similar to the "Covington" concept.

No sooner had they finished their project, than the Farmington Hills City Council adopted a new artwork ordinance — prompted by debate over the "Covington" sculpture.

Under an artwork ordinance enacted April 24, the Farmington Area Arts Commission will pass judgment on all art objects that property owners in non-single-family-residential areas propose for their front yards.

The planning commission will review plans and objects to assure they meet ordinance requirements. One art object is permitted per front yard.

Farmington schools art coordina-

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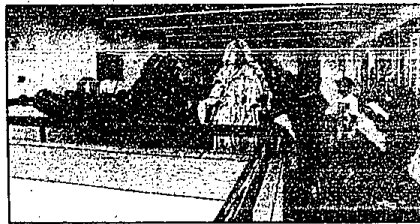
— Jean Warner
art coordinator, Farmington schools

tor Jean Warner said the local government action dovetailed into the student's studies perfectly.

It "impressed the importance of an informed point of view to make aesthetic decisions in and for a community," she said. "Our new art curriculum . . . strives to help children with higher-level thinking skills to analyze and evaluate in art criticism."

FOR THIS field trip project, students had a list of nine questions they were asked to answer as they viewed the "Covington" sculpture. Warner suggested they compare and contrast areas while walking through the subdivision, then with observing the Northwestern corridor.

They were to describe the subject of the sculpture, think about what



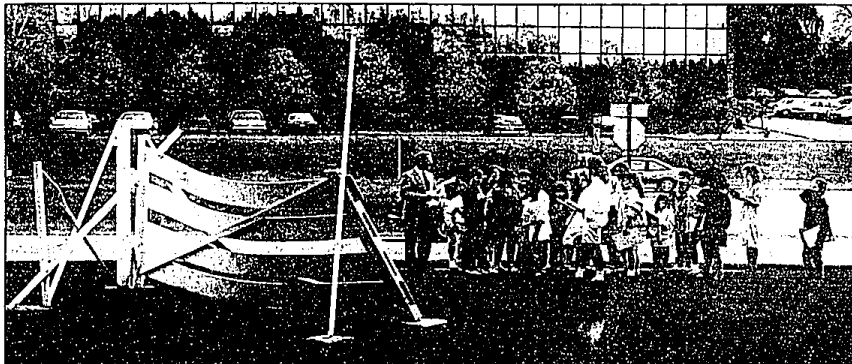
RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Wood Creek Elementary fifth graders review sculptures by artists Muriel Castanle, John Baisley and Gary Kulak, as part of their field trip. These sculptures are inside the offices of Holtzman and Silverman in Farmington Hills. Gilbert Silverman also owns the "Covington" sculpture on the office's front lawn, facing Northwestern Highway.

'I see a building in a swamp,' said one student of the sculpture 'Covington.'



RANDY BORST/staff photographer



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Landon Swanson and his fifth graders from Wood Creek Elementary observe the controversial "Covington" art sculpture on Northwestern Highway, as art consultant Jean Warner

draws reaction from students. Each Wood Creek fifth-grade class took a walking field trip to the sculpture this week after completing an urban perspectives study unit.

Farmington schools art consultant Jean Warner discusses art sculptures with fifth graders.

Paralyzed athlete shares his struggles, triumphs

Man wins
2nd place
medal

Chet Kuskowski won a second place medal in international water skiing this year — but his reward was more precious than silver.

The 24-year-old is paralyzed from the chest down, since being shot at age 18, but continues to strive and make a difference with his life.

Forest Elementary teacher Dodie Harris, who invited Kuskowski to talk with her fourth graders at the Farmington Hills school about his win and other life experiences, called the visit "enlightening."

"His whole attitude is that there's life after paralysis," she said. "He had the class spellbound."

Kuskowski shared with the class his silver medal won at the World Disabled Water Ski Competition in Perth, Australia in March, and brought his specially designed "sit ski" made of fiberglass and graphite.

Kuskowski's trip was sponsored by Home Care, Inc., a Dearborn company which Pat Smerecki, a Forest parent and Forest Hills resident, is the chief executive officer. Home Care manufactures equipment for use in the home by sick, older and physically challenged people.

Harris invited parent Smerecki and athlete Kuskowski to speak as part of her regular "Parent Pizzazz" program. The discussion of his paralysis tied in with an earlier classroom reading assignment about a physically disabled violinist.

As a special treat, Kuskowski autographed Home Care caps, which were given to each student.



BRIAN TOGOVALLAN/staff photographer

Chet Kuskowski shows off the medal he won in the men's slalom event during a world water skiing competition for the disabled in March in Australia.

'His whole attitude is that there's life after paralysis.'

— Dodie Harris
Forest Elementary teacher

Mystery writer to visit bookstore

With 10 novels, 1,500,000 copies in print, a major motion picture, and "The Rosary Murders" appearing on Billboard's most-rented video list, Father Robert Koester of Detroit has built a flock of loyal mystery fans.

Now, William X. Kienzle brings readers the 11th title in his best-selling series of mysteries. "Eminence"

is the story of the congregation of St. Stephen, a downtown Detroit quasi-monastery that seems to be performing miracles — and raking in the donations as well. As Father Koester investigates, he takes his readers behind the makeshift altar of St. Stephen's.

Kienzle will be at the Little Professor Book Center, 37115 Grand River at Halsted in Farmington, on Saturday, May 20, from 2-3 p.m. to autograph copies of "Eminence."

The book is a tale about a curious fivesome, a priest and the four religious brothers at St. Stephen.

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