

art on the edge

Art carries on Cass Corridor tradition

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Sculptor Matthew Hanna enters his power tool-outfitted studio uncertain of what he'll work on that day. Pieces of metal, bits of industry and a saw that cuts through steel assist him in the hunt for answers.

Influenced by the Cass Corridor artists, Hanna's sculptures and assemblages speak of Native American, women's and gay rights.

Using coils of rolled steel, world globes and jars of water from Walden's Pond, Hanna composes the pieces like "Two Hawks," "World Wide Lie," "Created Equal" and "Jesus Discovered America."

"It's assembled principally with objects I find at scrap yards or the side of the road when I'm antiquing or at garage sales," Hanna said in an interview in his Redford Township studio.

"Jesus Discovered America" makes people aware of the Mormon theory that Jesus discovered America. "Created Equal" is bringing an awareness of gay rights. The plastic oranges I bought in New York when the episode with Anita Bryant was going on."

Hanna begins his pieces by sketching an idea, then he turns to the steel. In an evolution of discovery, he goes back and forth between the actual work and sketching. Ideas trigger ideas until he has worked through the dilemma to lay down a statement.

"I think all of my work has a totem pole effect that tells a family story or the history," Hanna said. "They all tell a story of something I've seen or done. You retain a little bit of everything from your environment. Most of the time there is humor, a pun or an inside joke."

In quest of deeper meaning, Hanna continues to revolutionize a piece, adding and subtracting elements even after so-called completion.

World globes and truck images dot Hanna's work; tornadoes or whirlwinds twist through creating turbulence and an element of disharmony.

"It's the way the tornado comes through and destroys everything. The lightning bolt (topping 'Academics Playing Dixieland') is the same thing. It's haphazard," Hanna said. "In the body of work, there's a continuing here. What it boils down to is environment, the whole global thing."

Hanna has been showing work since his days at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. "Surfaces," a show with Troy artist Michelle Montone at Industry in Pontiac, led off the summer. That was followed by a solo exhibition, "Gods, Saints, Heroes and Other Nuts" at the Willis Gallery in Detroit.

There is an underlying power in the industrial materials used in Hanna's work. Power and industry, power and machines, power and stormy images make this young artist's work a future force.

Eight pieces of Hanna's art have been part of "Retro-Perspective: Cass Corridor Continuum," at the Detroit Artist's Market. The show focuses on five young artists chosen by five Cass Corridor artists. John Piet chose Hanna.

"Matt's work is starting to make strong statements," Piet said. "The rawness in the imagery gives it strength, the masterful handling of his surfaces."

Piet likes Hanna's "Academics Playing Dixieland," on exhibit in the courtyard at the Detroit Artist's Market show.

"Music has always been an influence in my work and I think it's probably been in Matt's. My work's been about various kinds of whirlwinds and circular imagery and I see that in his work. He uses imagery related to the city," Piet said.



JIM JACQUELLE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Finding answers: Sculptor Matthew Hanna's work is an evolution of discovery like his "Academics Playing Dixieland."

I can quit . . . really . . . I can quit . . . honestly

LEFT: BY CENTER



Jill Hamilton

Well, it finally happened. You know, the worst thing that could happen to a music writer.

I have a secret penchant for adult radio.

It all started a few months ago when I was driving around with my car radio in the usual scan mode. (For some reason, hearing that I have many choices of bad radio stations to listen to makes me feel better than just sticking with one bad station.) One of the scanned stations was playing a song by the Cure, so I stopped the radio there and

listened to the rest of the song. Then it happened.

An announcer came on and announced that I was listening to a WAMX 107.1, an "adult" station, and that a song by Toto was coming up next.

Yuck! Toto!

Yuck, listening to adult radio!

I quickly turned it off, thinking it would be the first step toward snapping my fingers happily to the the music played in elevators.

But, given the state of Detroit radio, I found myself on subsequent trips flipping past the station to see what was on. Sometimes, it was good (Peter

Gabriel, Sinead O'Connor), sometimes bad (sappy "jazz" instrumentals).

The most shocking thing was that an adult radio station would ever play anything worth listening to.

Eventually, I programmed the station into my radio. It wasn't that big a step since I have 15 buttons to fill, but I was sort of ashamed about the whole thing.

Still, I was curious as to who the station was trying to appeal with its weird format. I mean, who listens to both XTC and Toto?

So, I called program director Jane Wang. She said that the Ann Arbor-based station is trying out a new format called adult alternative. The play-

list is unusual because they are trying to compete with everyone else for the highly coveted 25-44 age bracket.

This is my age bracket. They got me. But it's not a problem. Really. I could quit anytime. I just listen to it on special occasions. Honest.

I could stop, if I wanted to. I just don't want to.

If you have a comment, question or suggestion, send it to Jill Hamilton, Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or leave a message by dialing 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, than mail box number 1888.