

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

MONDAY, Sept. 23, 1996

SHOPPING CENTERED



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

Art consultant makes house calls

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

When Kitty Gitulli of Farmington Hills needed a large painting for above her fireplace, the solution was simple. She called LaMarre Decors D'Elegance in Bloomfield Hills.

Owner Leanne LaMarre brought a gallery to her client's home, a service of her art and design consulting business. Within four months, an oil by Italian artist Romani hung in the traditional living room accented with oriental and antique furnishings.

"Leanne was an easy person to work with," Gitulli said. "She brought pieces to go with our personality. We lived with them for a few days but the paintings just weren't right. Next, she took us to several galleries. When we saw the painting of the mother and daughter picking wildflowers in a field at Galerie International in Birmingham, we knew it was right."

Although she began Leanne LaMarre Consulting Services five years ago, LaMarre's experience in selling art goes back 18 years. She previously represented marine artist Paul C. LaMarre, her ex-husband, selling hundreds of his watercolor paintings to galleries and private buyers. The contacts she made comprise a vast resource of available artworks for clients. In addition to her selling experience, LaMarre directed the Russell Klatt Gallery and served as an art consultant for the former Linda Hayman Gallery.

LaMarre Decors D'Elegance is the new branch of the consulting service offering residential clients every style and medium of art imaginable from works by Joan Miro to original oils, monoprints, serigraphs, posters, and custom commissioned art. For a specific consultation she may draw her art on consignment from the Michigan Design Center in Troy, or an artists' representative.

"I began the business because I wanted to be home for my children," she explained. "There's definitely a market for it because so many families are working families and don't have the time or expertise to search for artworks. We offer totally flexible hours. We work around our clients' schedules. It is less complicated to select art whether it is poster art or fine art, when it is presented in the surroundings in which it will be exhibited."

For a \$100 consulting fee, LaMarre brings art to a client's home after an initial telephone interview to decipher color schemes, decor style, and personal taste. If a purchase is made, the consultation is free. LaMarre then has the work matted, framed, and installed.

"My clients say they'll know it when they see it and nine times out of ten, they'll find something in the assortment I bring to their homes the first time."

Besides searching for wall art, LaMarre Decors D'Elegance designs and creates custom floral arrangements and swags, and special occasion decor. LaMarre's mother Shirley Burrows assists in this end of the business. One of their most popular items are Valentine's Day, an anniversary or Christmas, LaMarre designs three-foot elegantly adorned trees. Last year, she created and donated an all-Irish tree to benefit Brother Rice High School's annual auction.

Giuliani plans to consult LaMarre on a future purchase of an old world-style painting to hang in the three-story stairwell of her Tudor home with a turret, because she says the art consultant has become a friend. Clients comments like that prompt LaMarre to contain the size of her operation. She wants to personally pass on her knowledge and expertise to clients.

"A piece of art should offer you meaning or pleasure," she explained. "It's so important to like what you have on the wall because you're going to have to live it 10 years down the road."

Call (810) 433-3810 for an artistic appointment.

Downtowns welcome art galleries

Birmingham has "Art in the Park," Rochester "Arts 'N Apples," now it's Plymouth's turn as the 3rd annual "Plymouth is Artrageous" showcases the town's art wares Sept. 27-29.

BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO
STAFF WRITER

Art Galleries seem to naturally blend into the retail mix of a downtown business district. They're great for lazy afternoons browsing or seriously tracking down art for the office on your lunch hour.

Like downtown Birmingham and Rochester, Plymouth has been beefing up its art collections for the past few years and now boasts 10 galleries featuring everything from Navajo blankets to cartoon animation cells.

To promote the art shops in Plymouth, retailers have joined forces with the city's arts council to present a weekend celebration of the arts complete with music, competitions, demonstrations, artist visits and a silent film.

The art walk, Friday Sept. 27 through Sunday, Sept. 29, takes shoppers from gallery to gallery where displays and demonstrations will "expose visitors to many different forms of art," according to

Annette Horn of Native West Gallery.

"Artists from the high schools will be creating six-foot chalk murals in a competition, so you'll actually be walking on art as you visit the galleries," she said. "The highlight of the event is a special showing of The Rocky Horror Picture Show at the Penn Theater, complete with a live cast, beginning at 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 28. Tickets are \$5 and available at the galleries."

As an added feature, the Plymouth Music Festival will perform live in Kellogg Park. For a complete schedule of weekend events and a map of the walk route, guests can pick up an Artrageous Flyer from any of the downtown shops.

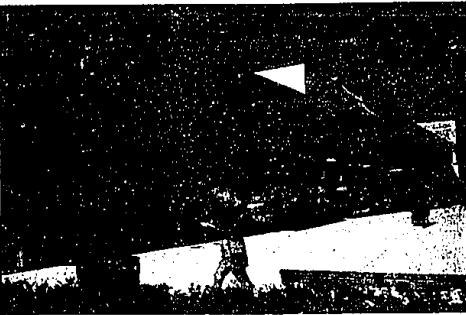
Horn suggested the boon in art galleries may be related to the new housing starts in northern Oakland County and the Canton-area.

"New housing starts mean people are decorating. Art galleries become a shopping destination."

Horn argued that galleries are best suited to downtown locations because the shops are near residences, and because malls are best for comparison shopping, where people are looking for the best prices on items, not necessarily items that are unique and custom.

"That's where downtown retail comes in, downtown tend to offer items you can't find in the shopping centers," she said.

Plymouth's biggest booster Gail Gotchell of the Principal Shopping District agreed.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREWER

Window shopping: Downtown Plymouth offers a unique assortment of art and gifts for the home.

"We have about 40 places where you can shop for art and home decor items in Birmingham," she said. "And we're getting more. Why? We can't compete with the big rug shows within one block. Downtowns are upscale urban environments and as such attract people who appreciate art, atmosphere and ambience. We also have many interior decorators in town who shop the galleries for their clients."

She pointed out that even when a gallery goes out of business, another one pops up to take its place.

"I think buying art has become a new art," insisted Diane Mackey, gallery director at Wild Wings in Plymouth. "People are putting money into what they like and they're buying better art."

Plymouth's art and gift galleries include Animation Station, Chameleon Gallery, Creative Framing and Gallery, Frameworks, Francis Jewelry Gallery, Gabriela's, Native West Gallery, Penniman Showplace, Wild Wings Gallery and The Plymouth Arts Council.

Designer offers clients modern options

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Sylvia Heisel made her way into fashion the hard way — doing freelance styling and sales clerking to a trunk show of her fall collection.

Today, celebrities like Nicole Kidman, Melanie Griffith, Madonna and Liza Minelli flock to the 34-year-old designer's showroom/factory

in New York's garment district.

Heisel recently came to the Tender Boutique in Birmingham for a trunk show of her fall collection. Tender Michigan's exclusive retailer of Heisel's designs. Among the latest separates were an ivory silk blouse with mandarin collar decorated with pearl buttons, \$350, and black silk crepe pencil pants, \$600.

"I strive for a sportswear feel in evening wear," said Heisel who just completed a resort collection. "I don't believe a woman feels good unless she looks good. My clothes are about being beautiful and elegant in a way that works in our society. The world is a much more casual place. There's been a huge demographic shift of women to the workplace. People are no longer wearing clothes that feel uncomfortable. Society doesn't have rules anymore. If it feels comfortable, it's right."

While Heisel prefers to work with silk and natural fibers like wool crepe, newly developed high-tech materials drape and stretch in ways she said she never thought possible. Once a year she said she attends a fabric show in Paris in search of not only the latest in textiles, but color. Heisel's designs are available in many solids and patterns because she believes color is personal.

New for fall is a brown dress with a circle skirt which was dance

inspired. Also, a teal chiffon bolero with pearl buttons, \$400, suitable over a black linen dress.

"If a woman plans to add something to her wardrobe, say a dress or suit, chocolate brown has been really strong this fall," she said.

Although there seems to be a move away from black on the fashion scene, black is a staple in Heisel's new collection. Her \$1,300 black silk trench coat was designed as a versatile basic.

"It's one of those things you can throw on over anything else. It's instant glamour," she said.

Raised in Princeton, New Jersey, Heisel began selling her clothes at 19, after putting the family's sewing machine to use. While still a student of art history at Barnard College, a buyer from Henri Bendel fell in love with a coat she wore to a party and Heisel was on her way.

She is proud of the fact her business has grown slowly and without the benefit of financial backers.

"I think I have a gift, a natural talent, but it's taken a tremendous amount of discipline and hard work," she said.

Heisel's trademark is body-skimming, bias-cut dresses, and single button jackets with clean lines. "It's about simple. I love clothes, simple and understated, that show the body and not try to alter the silhouette."

etc. They fit without being tight."

She disciplines herself everyday to sit down and create 50 sketches in a matter of hours.

Freedom to be

"We're still bashing women as an industry," she insisted. "The magazines dictate what women should and shouldn't wear. Being a good designer is being able to identify and top into what people want. It comes from a gut feeling. You know what you like, what you don't. I think clothing has to be fun. You don't always need a structured jacket with shoulder pads. For years, outfits have been built from a jacket on down."

"Why not get creative and throw a sweater over a dress or team a blouse and a pant?"



News of special events of interest to shoppers is included in this calendar. Send promotion information to: Mall & Mainstreets, c/o Birmingham Eccentric, 805 East Maple, 48009; or fax (810) 644-1314. The deadline is Wednesday at 5 p.m. for publication on Monday.

MONDAY, SEPT. 23

Reading Promotion

Through Sept. 28, Waldenbooks donates customer-requested purchases to the city's new library, plus a gift of 20-percent from those sales to the library. Shoppers can have a memorial seal placed into their library gift, acknowledging their donation.

Westland Center, Wayne/Warren. (313) 425-5001.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

Wardrobe seminar

Saks Fifth Avenue hosts a wardrobe workshop "Dressing With Style" through Canton Parks & Recreation through Nov. 7. For more information about class times and locations call the recreation center.

Fairlane Town Center, Michigan/Hubbard. Dearborn. (313) 597-5110.

Fall remodel expo

Through Sept. 29, home products, demonstrations, clinics sponsored by the Building Industry of Southeast Michigan, 2-10 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission: \$6. Discount tickets at Farmer Jack, Novi Expo Center, I-696/Novi. (313) 737-4478.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Craft Fair

Raub presents its annual mall arts and crafts show through Sept. 29 with Made-in-America pottery, paintings, jewelry, and much more. Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt. (810) 476-1160.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

Store concert

Borders Books and Music Cafe hosts Swing Street, performing easy listening New Jersey jazz, 8-10 p.m. On Sept. 28 join The Satin Dolls for swing and doowop harmony from 2-4 p.m.

Orchard Lakes/14 Mile, Farmington Hills. (810) 731-0100.

Parisian Fashion Event

Arlene Goldstein, Parisian's fashion director comes to town to meet shoppers and host a fashion show of Karen Kane fall's collection. Livonia 11:30-4 p.m. Tickets \$20, redeemable toward purchases of \$100 or more the day of event only. Reservations required. Seating limited. See the season's must-haves and view the new trends.

Laural Park, Six Mile/Newburgh, Livonia. (313) 462-1100.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 28

Crafts & Gift Event

The Card & Gift Center Hallmark hosts David Winter, Open House through Sept. 29. Limited edition craft pieces, store hours. Oakland Mall, 14 Mile/John R. (810) 588-6710.

Octoberfest/Collective Showcase

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. representatives from Lilliput, Lizardo, Disney, Hummel, Dept. 56 and more visit with holiday editions, family activities, door prizes. King's Court Castle Restaurant offers Octoberfest with German bands and special menu and beers, weekends through Oct. 6. Canterbury Village, I-76/Joslyn, Lake Orion. (810) 391-5700.

Fall Festival

Fun for the family — learn to make a scarecrow, go gourd golfing, play pumpkin bowling, paint pumpkins, guess the big pumpkin's weight, attend planting and pond-making workshops, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Sept. 29. Call for class times.

Four Seasons Garden, 11 Mile, Oak Park. (810) 545-4400.

Celebrity visit

Patti LaBelle signs autographs on behalf of Flori Roberto Cosmetics 2-5 p.m. at Hudson's Northland Center store in Southfield. Also, at the Hudson's Somerset Collection store in Troy, meet Helen Boehm chairman of Boehm Porcelain Studio, 1-3 p.m., third floor.