

ARTS & LEISURE

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CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Sports gallery scores with Red Wings fans

A few years ago, Michael Fischman of Birmingham thought there might be a market for a sports gallery. With sports memorabilia growing into a multi-million-dollar industry, he figured autographed photos, jerseys, balls and pucks would sell.

Calling his speculative venture into the gallery business "timely" is like referring to Michael Jordan as a pretty good basketball player. In the past several weeks, Fischman's timing has gotten even better. He'd probably even draw a pat on the back from his idol, baseball hitting legend Ted Williams. Good eye. Smooth swing. And aggressive at the plate.

With the Red Wings playing for the Stanley Cup, a limited-edition lithograph illustration of the Russian Five, available at Fischman's Sports Gallery in downtown Birmingham, has been one of the hottest-selling hockey items in North America.

Since placing an ad in "Hockey News" last week, the Sports Gallery has been selling 15 lithos per day at \$100-\$275, depending on the type of framing. Fischman is hoping for a dramatic seven-game series. But clearly, hockey fans are prepared to pay for a piece of history — real or perceived.

The litho reproduction of Fedorov, Fetisov, Konstantinov, Kozlov and Larionov by local artist Paul Madden came out last summer — not exactly at the height of the Red Wings' recent popularity. Last year, the Colorado Avalanche turned the tables on the Wings. Despite Detroit's recent victories during the regular season, local hockey fans only wanted to see one thing at the end of last season: the guys in red and white hoisting the Stanley Cup.

Fischman, who is also a real estate and tax attorney, bought the litho rights to the Russian Five litho from the hockey players, who tried their hand at American capitalism but failed at understanding the capricious buying habits of American sports fans. The demand for images of the Russian Five grew as the Wings blasted past the Blues, Mighty Ducks and Avalanche.

Collecting nostalgia

"People are into collecting just about anything," said Fischman, a self-described "basketball junkie" and self-flaming entrepreneur. He also owns Sports Dream, an athletic apparel store in Highland Park.

"Everywhere you look, people are into nostalgia. I can't believe it. It's nauseating. Of course, I'm really into it."

Clearly, the value of an autographed puck, baseball bat or football helmet depends on how fervent the fans, how popular the athlete-celebrity and how rare the item. (An autograph of former White Sox Shoeless Joe Jackson can fetch thousands.)

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STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

Living dream: The opening of the Southfield Centre for the Arts is a 20-year dream come true for steadfast supporters of the arts. Front row (l to r): Robert Block, city administrator; Lucius Theus, president of the Federation for the Arts; Susan Schmidt, arts federation board member; Marlowe Belanger, vice president cultural arts division; Albert Scaglione, arts federation board member. Back row (l to r): Jeff Farland, director of parks and recreation; and Patrick Beckley, vice president arts federation.

Southfield Centre for the Arts — A place to call home

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Weeks before the grand opening, large pieces of plywood were placed over the broken stained-glass windows at the Southfield Centre for the Arts. Vandals left their mark — again. Skeptics probably shook their heads and warned, "I told you so."

Yet for those who've stood steadfast for as long as 20 years to see the center become a reality, it was another moment to endure.

Without missing a beat, an idea was readily accepted to transform the shards of colored glass into a sculpture held together by copper wire. The art work will hang along the walls and ceiling near the entrance to the refurbished auditorium.

Unifying the arts community

"This is an investment in the community where everyone can come together regardless of race, gender, ethnic background and religious beliefs," said Robert Block, city administrator for Southfield.

Many local art centers provide performance spaces, said Block, but few offer as many classrooms and rehearsal spaces for a community that reflects the American melting pot as much as any other city.

"The arts community has been fragmented," said Block. "Some groups meet at high schools, halls or any place they can. We now have a place where they all can meet. This unifies the arts."

During the much-anticipated three-day celebration, the center will feature a packed schedule of arts activities including performances of dance, music, poetry readings and a fine art exhibit. The intent is to showcase a bustling arts center that provides classroom arts instruction, rehearsal spaces and high-quality auditoriums for community groups and professional performances.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony begins Saturday's events, highlighted by an evening concert of the legendary singing groups The Coasters, The Platters and The Drifters.

To date, Southfield has provided about \$4 million to buy and renovate the former B'nai David Synagogue. Another \$3 million is

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What: Southfield Centre for the Arts Grand Opening sponsored by the City of Southfield Parks and Recreation and the Cultural Arts Division

When: Friday-Sunday, June 6-8. The center opens 7 p.m. Friday, June 6. Opening weekend hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, June 7, and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, June 8.

Where: 24350 Southfield Road, just south of 10 Mile. Entertainment: More than 30 live performances of dance, drama, and music including blues, jazz, choir, and orchestra will be presented during grand opening weekend. Call (810) 424-9222 for information.

Highlights
■ Mosaic Youth Theatre's "Moana Tales" with Michigan Opera Theatre's "Broadway to Hollywood" 8 p.m. Friday, June 6; \$10 general admission.
■ The Coasters, The Platters, The Drifters with special guests: Neil Hopper and Michele Rame 8 p.m. Saturday, June 7; \$25, \$30, reserved.
■ Michigan Association of Artists Exhibit, and Park West Gallery presentation: The Works of Anatole Krasnyansky.

Creative challenges ahead for Southfield Centre

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Not since the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1982 has a major arts center been unveiled in metro Detroit. In many ways, the challenges ahead for the Southfield Centre for the Arts could parallel those faced by the Macomb Center.

Fifteen years ago, the 144,000-square-foot center on the campus of Macomb Community College was built for \$9 million. Considering the center's outstanding acoustics, the facility would probably cost twice as much today.

In the early 1980s, the center was financed by a county tax. Until recently, it was largely supported by the college. It wasn't until three years ago that the Macomb Center was in the black and on its way to becoming financially self-sufficient, said Lynne Hoover, marketing director.

"It's taken a while to get an identity," she said. "For a while, people thought we only had small college productions."

On the contrary, with 340 activities in the first three-quarters of its fiscal year, the Macomb Center is one of the busiest venues in the country, presenting Broadway musicals and a variety of music series, including jazz, blues, country and opera. They also rent their 1,250-seat auditorium and a "black box" space to local theater and dance companies.

The breakthrough, said Hoover, came about five years ago when the center began to promote big-name performers. A sophisticated database of interested county residents and a glossy brochure were instrumental to their success, she said.

"The key is to define what the community wants," said Larry Carrio, Macomb Center production manager. "We've defined our community as seniors, those interested in country, children's theater and Oldies acts. Plus, we're affordable. We don't have \$45 tickets."

Marketing is hardly a concern at the Plymouth Community Arts Council. Since moving into the renovated former Jehovah's Witness church at Sheldon and Junction, they've presented art classes, youth choir, recitals and exhibited work of local fine artists.

Before moving into their new space, the Joanne Winkelman Hulco Center for the Arts, the Plymouth arts group gathered at a small downtown storefront. "We've been fiscally conservative," said Stella Green, vice president of the arts council. "We have a pay-as-you-go philosophy."

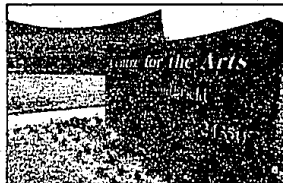
The \$360,000 renovation will be paid through a Michigan Council for the Arts Cultural Affairs grant, a state equity grant, membership fees and donations from local corporations.

In the Farmington area, where 24 arts groups have formed the Farmington Arts Council, there's been talk about turning the former Mercy Center at 11 Mile and Middlebelt into an area-wide arts center.

"I don't think it's in the cards," said Dan Potter, head of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation. The department provides recreational programming services in the Farmington area.

"When the city purchased that facility, it was intended for a recreational and cultural meeting place for seniors," he said.

A formal survey of Farmington Hills residents conducted in preparation for a parks and recreation tax request found that a majority favored an art center. "Unfortunately, we recognized that funding (an art center) would wipe out our budget," said Potter.



Sign of a dream: The Southfield Centre for the Arts on Southfield Road.

ART SHOW



Peaceful Beauty: Beverly Hills artist Lucille Nawara captures the serenity of "Fisley Falls" in this large-scale oil painting.

Festival brings fine artists, crafters together

BY LINDA AIN CHOMEN
STAFF WRITER

"Art in the Village" June 7-8 at Greenmead Historical Village in Livonia brings fine art and crafts together for the first time.

Fifty-one artists will show paintings, pastels, photography, intaglio prints, mixed media and three-dimensional art works in the Shaw House, Quaker Meeting House, and Newburg Methodist Church and School. At the same time, more than 100 artists will exhibit their wares in the 21st annual Arts & Crafts Festival hosted by the Livonia Arts Commission.

Former arts commissioner Pat Gutierrez came up with the idea for the fine arts exhibit last year. This is the first time since the 1980s that the arts commission is hosting a statewide competition/exhibition. Chairperson Billie

Thompson and arts commission president Bob Sheridan are both artists who strongly support the fine arts exhibit.

"There seemed to be a lack of appreciation for the arts and cultural events," said Sheridan. "We didn't think the fine arts exhibit could draw enough visitors on its own. We're hoping the fine arts and the arts and crafts festival, which is established, would feed off and support each other."

Combining the historical allure of the village area of Greenmead with a fine arts exhibit, and an arts and crafts festival, should entice a broader audience to the historical grounds. The village is a recreation of the Newburgh Road/Ann Arbor Trail intersection as it existed between 1910 and 1925. The crossroads of Newburgh Corners anchored a prosperous farming community.

Greenmead rests on 104 of the 160 acres deeded

to Joshua Simmons by President John Quincy Adams for \$225 in 1825. The grounds are divided into two time periods, the village of the early 1900s, and the farm complex, which contains home-stands from the 1850s.

"I think it's wonderful; we've combined the historical buildings with fine art," said Thompson. "It's a wonderful opportunity to see fine art in historic homes. While the traditional art will complement the furnishings, it will be interesting to see abstracts in such a setting."

Award-winning watercolorist Toni Stevens looks forward to exhibiting her portrait "Sophia with Apple & Pear" at Art in the Village. The Plymouth resident painted the work during a class with Mary Aro at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art

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