

# ARTS & LEISURE

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## CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

### Tri-county leaders take steps to reestablish dialogue on arts funding

Few other issues reflect the logjam in our public discourse than public funding to the arts.

Want to start an argument? Ask whether tax money should support the arts. The barbarians would rather storm the gates than toss a few cents to struggling artists or a museum in need.

While arts supporters generally feel a sense of urgency about the lack of public funds, politicians have reluctantly touched the issue for fear of eliciting the wrath of an anti-tax populace.

But there's a glimmer of evidence that reason, not political advantage, might be setting the course.

During the last 10 days there have been encouraging signs that elected officials in the region are willing to set aside political gamesmanship in the interest of maintaining our shared culture.

#### Flexibility the key

Monday, representatives from Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties revisited the proposal of a 1/2 mill property assessment to generate revenue to support the region's 14 tier-one cultural institutions, such as the DIA, Meadow Brook, Cranbrook and the Detroit Zoo.

Many of these institutions are operating at about 50 percent of the funding level of the late 1980s.

"I want to be assured that these institutions will look to be self-sustaining," said John McCulloch, chair of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, who attended the tri-county meeting. "They have to show that they have a long-term plan to remain competitive."

McCulloch called last year's funding proposal (Senate Bill 1053) "too rigid" because it failed to incorporate some basic political realities. While McCulloch did not say so, one "political reality" was that under the initial plan, Oakland County would generate 42 percent of the tax revenue but only receive one-quarter membership on the proposed 16 member tri-county cultural council. Expect a change in that arrangement.

If the cultural institutions can demonstrate more flexibility and prove that they do not plan to rely solely on the tax revenue, McCulloch is prepared to step up his support. But he emphasized not until all his concerns are answered.

For instance, McCulloch wants to know who'll administer the projected \$40.7 million tax revenue, and how much will go to fledgling or small arts groups.

That should allay the concerns of local arts groups who fear they'll get frozen out of public funds.

Currently, Detroit Renaissance, which spearheaded last year's failed millage proposal, is working to get the 14 cultural institutions to think in terms of sound business plans, rather than exhibition and concert schedules.

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## VINTAGE POSTERS:

# Biscuits Lefevre-utile



SNAPSHOTS  
OF POP  
CULTURE  
OVER PAST  
100 YEARS



**Advertising art:** Diane Shipley-DeCillis, owner of The Print Gallery, has gathered an impressive collection of vintage posters dating from the late 19th century through today. The demand - and value - for vintage poster art is increasing rapidly.

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

Even a solemn cynic like Andy Warhol might be impressed with the widespread popularity of poster art. In influence, appeal and collectibility, poster art has become the ultimate democratic means to spread aesthetic bliss to the masses.

For Diane Shipley-DeCillis, owner of The Print Gallery in Southfield, art printed on a poster is the equivalent of a public visual library whereby people can choose and buy art without worrying about what is "important art" or mortgage their homes to purchase an original work.

In the spirit of entertaining commercialism, The Print Gallery's Vintage Poster Exhibit represents the finest advertising placards from their permanent collection. In style and intent, the posters' power of suggestion precedes the more

sophisticated modern-day commercial persuasion pill.

The Vintage Poster Exhibit includes colorful graphic images of coquettish French ladies, robust Italian maidens and dreamy oceanic landscapes. While the posters reflect a distinctive historical flavor and graphic style, they remain true to the capitalistic zeal in hocking products - champagne, olive oil, pleasure cruises, cigars, broth mints, biscuits and movies.

Advertising as art? Commercial expression worthy of aesthetic virtue? What could be more American?

#### Poster appeal

Besides its vintage poster collection, The Print Gallery carries a range of art posters from masters like Caravaggio and Rembrandt to American artists Winslow Homer and Andrew Wyeth. In the boutique

• What: Vintage Poster Exhibit  
• When: Through July 31  
• Where: The Print Gallery, 29203 Northwestern Hwy., Franklin Plaza at 12 Mile Road, Southfield  
• Hours: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday-Saturday; 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Thursday; (248) 356-5454.

atmosphere "art" also can be found on Picaso-esque dinner plates, Monet-colored scarves and van Gogh-inspired note cards.

"My quest is to find as many things with Mona Lisa (on it) as I can," said Shipley-DeCillis of West Bloomfield who boasts owning a pair of socks with the alluring female of Da Vinci's masterpiece.

In the mid 1980s, Shipley-DeCillis published "The Nut Gatherers" by Bougerau, one of the most popular-selling posters in recent history for

Please see POSTERS, C2

## ARTIST

### The mystical world of Nancy Thayer

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

For most baby boomers, angst is everywhere. Struggles abound: job insecurity, mid-life crises, marital woes, declining health and increasing body fat.

Even listening to classic rock and oldies won't make reality go away. And if growing up weren't enough of a drag, many boomers must take care of the same parents they once rebelled against.

Perspective doesn't come easily. Nor without plenty of gut-wrenching. Yet Nancy Thayer of Lathrup Village has found a hopeful, quiet perspective while standing at the unnerving middle-age abyss.

A soft-spoken boomer on a mission,

Thayer quietly holds a connection to the world as mystical as her cathartic layering of oils, pastels, charcoal, acrylics and pencil. Thayer's abstract expressionistic creations of the last three years comprises "Conversations/Transformations," currently on exhibit at the Barbara Bunting Gallery in Royal Oak.

Distinguished by the motif of a descending tunnel of light amid a darkened field, Thayer's paintings reflect a contemporary symbol to illuminate the many layers of consciousness.

A casual look at her work detects a similarity to the paintings of Barnett Newman, particularly his "Onement I," distinguished by a line straight down the middle in a highly structural and symmet-

rical landscape. And the subtle uniformity of her work can be associated with Mark Rothko's meditative paintings.

While Thayer may be placed in the existential painting tradition of American artists such as Newman, Rothko and Milton Avery, her work can't be discarded as derivative.

"These works are seducing," said Barbara Bunting, gallery director, whose selected exhibits over the last several years have been remarkably consistent and rewarding.

"Their energy creates a quiet atmosphere where you can talk about what matters - life, relationships and mortality,"

Please see THAYER, C2



Quiet connections: Artist Nancy Thayer of Lathrup Village has captured a compelling motif to reflect the many levels of consciousness. The subtle uniformity in her paintings recall the meditative paintings of American abstract artist Mark Rothko.