

Sculptors from page D1

tion manager at Bozell Worldwide Inc., a Southfield advertising agency, will compete as part of pregame cultural programs held in Nagano, Japan, prior to the 1998 Winter Olympic Games' opening ceremonies Feb. 7.

They will be competing in the individual category at the Plymouth International Ice Sculpture Spectacular.

"It's a matter of time and preparation. The drawing, layout and practice needed for an event like Plymouth is extensive. We felt it would be too taxing for us the week before we go over to Japan."

In addition to competing in Nagano, Wakar and Bur will once again compete in the World Ice Sculptors Competition Feb. 5-7 in Asahikawa, Japan.

The brothers-in-law were the first U.S. team ever to win the competition when they captured the title in 1986 at the 37th annual event.

They said individual competitions and carving 76 street sculptures for the Plymouth event will help them prepare physically and mentally for lifting 300 pound blocks of ice in below zero temperatures in Japan.

Japan.

"As we get closer to Japan, we'll be going down to the ice house to stack our piece for the Olympics," said Bur. Seeing it on paper, and then seeing it life-size on the wall, and then in ice - it's a totally different perspective."

Wakar and Bur have spent hundreds of hours preparing for the competitions in Japan. Every day they fine tune the design for their sculptures. Before a chainsaw touches the ice, hours of strategizing, drawing and planning go into creating a world-class sculpture. Dozens of sketches lie on the drawing board and desk of Wakar's Frozen Images studio in Plymouth. Ten hours of practice in mid-December led to more drawing after one of the figures collapsed as they neared the final stages.

Since the theme of the 1998 Winter Olympic Games is peace, their sculpture will consist of two female children, hands clasped in front of them. Usually, these sketches are shown to no one so as to protect their ideas from other carvers until the time of execution.

"It's still working out the kinks in the design," said Bur, Jr. "The idea was that without the other, one falls over. We like the figures because of the playfulness, the hair blowing in the wind. There's a fluid motion going on. The hair and apparel says movement. The base, which

we'll be working on in Plymouth, has movement as well. When you're doing an ice carving you have to create a scene, it isn't just a figure or a bird by itself. There has to be a beauty and peacefulness to it, a strength of design, making it more than just a couple of carvings in front of your face and that's difficult to do."

So what makes an ice carving good? Universally, the criteria for "good art" cuts across mediums. Movement is important to an award-winning piece but so are a number of other elements like originality in subject matter, a high quality of craftsmanship and artistic achievement, and the ability to draw the eye in and around the three dimensional piece.

Carvers from page D1

of 24 students will create a 25-block scene from "Little Mermaid." Rowson expects the students to spend four days carving the commissioned piece.

"It's an opportunity to practice team work," said Rowson, a Farmington Hills resident and coordinator of the Winterfest ice sculpture event in Birmingham Feb. 5-8. "There's so much ice out there, they're not intimidated by it. It's a positive learning experience. I suggest to my stu-

dents that they become one with the ice."

"Plymouth is probably more well known for the Ice Spectacular than for being the site of the Daisy BB gun factory," said Watta. "We get calls from around the world asking about it. We had a call from the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham asking when they've had calls from people who stayed there last year while attending the event."

Thewes from page D1

artists because of the earth-tone pallet and dark thematic currents in his work. Thewes' paintings are not so much shocking as revealing.

Arguably, his work reflects a growing trend that blurs the lines among graphic art, computer-enhanced imagery and fine art.

Break out

Thewes' dazzling use of form, dramatic tension and his futuristic composition just might lead to breaking out from the "underground artist" label, said Rick Manore, C Pop Gallery owner whose aggressive promotion style has helped to elevate local artists Glenn Barr and Niagara to international attention.

"There's an intellectual intercourse in Tom's work," said Manore. "He doesn't have to resort to shock to get people's attention. He's got something to say about the world."

Unlike Thewes' underground artistic brethren infatuated with perverse imagery and versions of the impending apocalypse, much of his work is lpyered with meaning, rather than self-absorption.

It's a perspective Thewes attributes to his Catholic upbringing and the belief that there must be lasting moral values in the vortex of American culture.

"I look around, there's such a lack of faith in everything," said Thewes, a graduate of Birmingham Brother Rice and Center for Creative Studies in 1989.

"People are searching for something to believe in," he said.

Search for 'the real'

In the retro style of the '90s and Information Age, the resurrection of cubism and futurism seems like natural timing for an artist like Thewes, who has an ability to combine found-objects and computer technology in his paintings.

The contradiction of working with the refuse of post-industrialism and the latest software is strikingly similar to the cubists' response to the profound industrial changes occurring a century ago.

The angularity that distinguishes cubism evolved in response to the modern technical world of the early 1900s. Early cubist artists such as Picasso and Braque contended that the innovative form of painting represented a closer equation between art and "the real."

A century later, artists continue to struggle with reflecting "what is real." In today's world, the task facing artists inevitably requires addressing issues of rapid societal change, the integration of new and old techniques, use of popular imagery and technology, and ultimately, accepting or rejecting the role of faith.

In many ways, Thewes seems to be a conduit for those currents.

"Everyone is caught up with computers and the Internet, and in Detroit there's still this hard-core smelting mentality," he said. "It is the home of the post-industrial society."

And Thewes contends the creative energy reflects the struggle to come to grips with a high-tech culture where innovation is often

Art on Display

What: "Sandpaper Sally," new works by Tom Thewes

When: Through Sunday, Feb. 8

Where: C Pop Gallery, 515 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak; (248) 398-9999

a step ahead of comprehension.

In Thewes' studio, where the walls are covered in thick plastic sheets, a disassembled typewriter is strewn on the floor, not far from a large metal box of tools and other "found objects," collected at refuse sites. He's used a range of objects, including tin, wire bed frames, warped boards and a miniature trampoline in his work.

In the front of the studio, Thewes has placed two video arcade games, which he readily invites visitors to play, as he says, "to pass the time."

Like his paintings, Thewes' studio is a place where industrial grittiness meets virtual reality.

"My approach is to look at art more as communication than something about ego," he said.

Meanwhile, in the back room, Thewes has assembled a state-of-the-art computer system where he scans, manipulates and prints illustrations and other images.

Manore calls Thewes one of the most sought-after commercial illustrators working on a computer in the region. This past summer, Thewes signed with Bernstein & Andriulli of New York to represent his work internationally.

Several weeks ago, he was called by Levi Strauss Co. to submit illustrative ideas for their new image campaign. He was given 24 hours. He made the deadline because he said he knew "it was important to show that I'm a team player."

That's an unusual admission from an artist.

Turn down the noise

While many artists draw a sharp line between commercial art and art that reflects their personal vision, Thewes strives for a seamless between the two.

"Before a client would come in with a style in mind as if they could just pick it off the shelf. But now, art directors give you an idea, and say, 'We like your style, do whatever you want.'"

That's nothing new for Thewes. He's been doing exactly what he's wanted.

Soft-spoken, polite and filled with the wonderment of a bohemian, Thewes doesn't lead on that he could have easily taken another path.

While some artists cringe at the sight of a computer, Thewes finds it as natural as clicking a remote. It runs in the family.

His father, Tom Thewes Sr., was one of the three founders of Compuware, a billion-dollar software services company of Farmington Hills.

For a while, Thewes worked in the graphics department at Compuware. But, eventually, he decided he had to go his own way.

It was just a matter of faith.

Conversations from page D1

most unpretentious reason for writing: to understand the direction of their lives.

After a year of writing, rewriting and editing, the nine writers progressed through rigorous feedback and self-analysis.

In assembling the manuscript, they also began to learn about the intangibles of publishing success: marketing and publicizing their book.

"Up from the Soles" was published in December. Yankee Pedlar, a reputable book distributor, has delivered the anthology to Borders and public libraries throughout the region.

But writing is only part of a successful book as any author on a book-signing tour will attest. There's that other thing: the "a" word - sales.

The writers receive a generous percentage of sales from their books, and set out on their own to arrange readings and book signings at book stores, association meetings or living rooms.

While this may sound more like practice than the real thing, "Up from the Soles" is not merely a how-to exercise for struggling writers. And the book is not just a "worthy" effort to be purchased only by relatives and

friends.

"Up from the Soles" is significant because of the diversity of voices, and the singularity of its tone. As it states on the cover, the anthology is indeed "a woman's reader."

But clearly, it's not written for an exclusive gender.

The passages on death, dying, relationships, incest, drug addiction and nature are not strictly "women's issues." More specifically, these issues are addressed from a uniquely woman's point of view, and thankfully, devoid of ideology and preachiness.

What is a woman's point of

view? It's a perspective steeped in setting, place and attachment to people, memories and feelings. It's a refreshing "rootedness" in a swirling, rapidly changing culture.

In parts, the writing in "Up from the Soles" is raw and unpolished. But it is unflinchingly honest.

These are writers searching to understand and come to grips with gnawing issues. Their writing reflects an accessibility and openness, a passage by which to meet the reader halfway.

LaGattuta cites a Spanish word to describe the writers' process of development - duende, which means, through the darkness comes understanding.

For years, Manji had been writing poems inspired by her paintings and sculptures. A fine artist, who studied at the Cochran School of Art, Manji earns a living as a psychiatric nurse in research.

She's written several articles for professional journals, and has seen first-hand the relationship between creativity and mental illness in her research on patients suffering from manic depression.

Her research work has shed light on her personal writing and artistry.


"To be an artist, you have to have an incredible sensitivity," she said. "You look at those things that most people don't seem to notice."

And based on her contribution to "Up from the Soles," Manji notices quite a bit.

She's obviously experienced duende. And has come away sounding like a writer.


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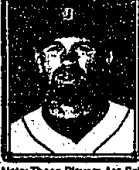
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