

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Redmonds train follows new track

On a bitterly cold March morning, the CSX train steams southward, away from Elaine and Eve Redmond's Clique Gallery in Royal Oak. On some days, the Amtrak train races by faster than sand through a sieve. There's a daunting proximity to the track. So close that the sound of churning steel wheels slices through your ears, and the floor shudders like a southern California spasm.

Your mind tells you that the train will stay on the track. Your heart tells you to run.

"Elaine Redmond doesn't flinch. "You get used to it," she said.

Maybe. For today, there's a feeling that no one really knows where another set of tracks lead.

In mid April, the Beverly Hills residents will be packing up and getting on a train moving in a new direction when they close the doors at their gallery.

The decision to close wasn't based on bottom-line realities.

For the record, the Redmonds were above breaking even.

The gallery will close because familial obligation requires it.

Two months ago, Elaine Redmond's mother died. Her 86-year-old father was now alone.

As an only child, the responsibility to care for her elderly father fell on her.

"I've done a job for strangers for nearly every six weeks for seven years," said Redmond.

"I love what I do, but there are priorities."

Like taking her father on trips back to his home state of Pennsylvania.

"I'm just looking forward to going on walks with him," she said.

Closing one door. Opening another.

Warm space

The Redmonds have done what many galleries talk about — reaching out to local artists, the community and students.

Their annual "Insect" show and an exhibit featuring works of adult artists inspired by children's artwork have shown innovation and a commitment to arts education.

For another month, mother and daughter will be together. Business partners. Strikingly similar and distinctively different.

Elaine describes the business partnership as "a kaleidoscope and a microscope." A free-association thinking mother, and a business-like daughter.

The walls in the modest 20-by-16-foot space are colored purple, orange and green.

"I didn't want to be elitist," said Elaine. "We wanted a warm space."

How warm? The thermostat is camouflaged behind a painting. And the storage closet, where art hangs on the walls, is also used as a bathroom.

An "intimate space" is more like it. Their current exhibit, "It's A Wrap," features many of the artists who've shown at the Clique in the last three years.

For the Redmonds, it's a farewell — for now. Local artists will probably see Elaine, every now and then, as a guest curator.

But today, in the distance, another train is on its way. And when the shrill whistle blows, your initial reaction is to seek shelter.

Elaine Redmond smiles. "You'll get used to it."

There's comfort knowing that the train keeps moving.



Beckers: Elaine Redmond, left, and daughter, Eve, will close the doors at their gallery.

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL

Community embraces truly 'different' films

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

Jacki Ochs' "Letters Not About Love" doesn't fit easy classification. The New York filmmaker has won prizes at the Sundance and New York film festivals for her documentary on Agent Orange, "Secret Agent."

But "Letters" is different, more personal and experimental. The kind of film that finds a home in Ann Arbor.

"The Ann Arbor Film Festival has this interesting reputation and my films are particularly tough to situate in the world of spin and niche," Ochs said. "It's consciously different, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival has a reputation for embracing films that are different."

The festival, which begins six days of experimental film screenings Tuesday (see schedule), has been providing a forum for the unusual, the experimental and the personal in filmmaking for 32 years. Such name directors as George Lucas and Brian DePalma showed here early in their careers. Other name entrants include Kenneth Anger, claymation master Will Vinton, Oscar-nominee Gus Van Sant ("Good Will Hunting") and Yako Ono.

"Sundance has coopted the term independent. They represent independent filmmakers who are not independent," said festival director Vicki Honeyman. "They're supposedly independent of Hollywood movies, but they are making huge films that cost a lot of money. The filmmakers who enter in Ann Arbor are truly independent."

Honeyman said the Ann Arbor is the only film festival dedicated to independent, experimental 16mm film.

"We don't pre-screen on videotape. We get prints. We're looking at the true art, not a facsimile. We're about art, not about producers and glitz," she said.

The Ann Arbor Film Festival was

Please see FILMS, C2



24 Girls: In Eva Brzeski's experimental film, she weaves an audition of young girls with the story of a girl that died years ago.



Babushka: (Above) Galina Filippouna represents Russian grandmothers in Jacki Ochs' "Letters Not About Love."



Dictators: Jay Rosenblatt takes an unusual look at 20th century dictators in "Human Remains."

Ann Arbor Film Festival

What: Six day festival of independent, experimental films.

Where: Michigan Theatre, Liberty, Ann Arbor

When: March 17-22. 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 17; 3, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 18; 3, 7, 9:30 and 11 p.m. Thursday, March 19; 3, 7, 9:30 p.m. Friday, March 20; 1, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday, March 21; Winners screenings, 5, 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday, March 22.

Tickets: \$6 per single ticket or \$10 for an entire evening. Series tickets for the entire week for \$35. Showings at 1, 3 and 11 p.m. are free. On sale at the Michigan Theatre Box Office 45 minutes before show-time. Call (734)995-5356.

EXHIBITION

Painter sees the extraordinary in the ordinary

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

Think in the art world can be esoteric and high-falutin. In other words, down-right boring.

But there's been an ongoing discussion for the last 20 years that resonates with particular relevance during these days of unquestioned reliance on high-tech solutions and rapid-fire video imagery.

The discussion pertains to the contribution of the realist painter Fairfield Porter, whose unassuming portraits, landscapes and still lifes resound in the deep American tradition of Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins and Edward Hopper.

A modest collection of Porter's paintings, watercolors and drawings from 1948 to 1972 are currently at the Susanne Hilberry Gallery in Birmingham.

While there's been growing interest in Porter's vivid use of color and subtle depictions, there hasn't been many

What: "Fairfield Porter: Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings"
When: Through Saturday, April 11
Where: Susanne Hilberry Gallery, 555 S. Woodward Avenue, Birmingham, (248) 642-8250
Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; and by appointment

exhibits since his death in 1975.

"There isn't a lot of work that's available," said Hilberry, who included Porter's portrait of poet Frank O'Hara in her inaugural gallery exhibit in 1976.

Today, the value of that painting, purchased from Hilberry by the Toledo Art Museum shortly after the opening, has far exceeded the \$200,000 price of 22 years ago.

Since 1976, Hilberry has continued to show a few works of Porter, but she hasn't held an exhibit exclusively featuring Porter since 1980. Largely because, she said, collectors and museums are holding on to Porter's work.

In 1983, a much-anticipated and critically acclaimed retrospective on Porter's work appeared at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

The paintings, watercolors and drawings in the current show at the Hilberry Gallery have been collected from the secondary market and the Porter estate, said Hilberry.

The pen and ink drawings appear to be uninspired sketches for paintings, whereas the watercolors uncharacteristically lack Porter's deft touch.

The paintings, however, come closest to demonstrating his sensibility for discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary details of everyday.

Devoid of intellectualization, Porter's subjects are strikingly puritanical in tone: meadows, goldenrods, a vase of flowers, a young girl and her dog, and a young boy eating breakfast.

How you see

What can a painter known as a virtu-

What: Chamber Music Society of Detroit presents the Borodin String Quartet in concert performing a program of Shostakovich's String Quartets — No. 1 in C Major, Op. 49; No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 110; and No. 12 in D-flat Major, Op. 133.

Where: 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 18
Where: Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward, Detroit

Tickets: \$5-\$39, (313) 961-3500, or (313) 833-3700

Also of note:

■ Lecture on Shostakovich by music critic John Guinn — When: 3-4 p.m. Sunday, March 15, at The Community House of Birmingham, 380 S. Bates, downtown Birmingham (access from Shain Park and the Baldwin Library). For reservations, call (248) 644-5832.

Quartet captures Shostakovich

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER

About the time the Chamber Music Society of Detroit was founded 54 years ago, Dmitri Shostakovich was wearing a hard hat and volunteering to help his countrymen find shelter during the terrifying siege on Leningrad.

The resolution of the Second World War, and inevitable expansion of the Soviet state, however, did little to quell

the rage in the composer's heart.

Tyranny, he recognized, wasn't restricted to an invading force.

Despite the Soviet government's insistence on music that served ideological, not solely individual artistic purposes, Shostakovich's music has survived as among

the most original and influential of the 20th century.

This Wednesday, the Chamber Music Society of Detroit presents the Borodin

Quartet in a program of several of Shostakovich's most intimate and passionate melodic expressions for string quartet.

Secret dissident

While he wasn't under house arrest or deported as were Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, Shostakovich was part of a long tradition of resistance inside the former Soviet Union.

In his controversial book, "Testimony" published in 1979, author Solomon Volkov revealed Shostakovich as a secret dissident, infusing his music with nontraditional compositions to "sound like no one else."

The effect often infuriated state officials.

Until his death in 1975, Shostakovich frequently fell in and out of favor with the state ideologues.

Although to the west, he often looked like a good communist soldier.

"He suffered at the hands of the communists," said John Guinn, longtime music critic who will give a lecture on Shostakovich today at The Community House in Birmingham.

The tone and startling harmonic progressions of Shostakovich's most distinctive music left Soviet censors por-

Please see QUARTET, C2



Presence: Fairfield Porter's "Breakfast," circa 1949, reflects a loose impressionistic style, and a distinctive domestic sensibility.

oso colorist teach us about our contemporary quandary? And, what's to learn from Porter's lush landscape, impressionistic spruces and birches, and depictions of normal domesticity?

Please see PAINTER, C2