

Wounds from page C1

to each of the participating artists. The only stipulation was that the artists had to spend time listening to the stories of women with breast cancer.

Somerset is one of five U.S. shopping centers chosen for the exhibit among 78 that were considered across the nation.

"It's both an opportunity to celebrate and mourn," said Linda McIntosh, marketing director of the Somerset Collection.

"It's not a typical mall event, but with the emphasis on (breast cancer) prevention and education, it seemed a natural for a public exhibit."

With one in eight women likely to contract breast cancer, the exhibit is a way to address the often-hidden issues surrounding the disease, including topics of guilt, fear, alienation, depletion and questions of faith.

While death and dying hover like a sullen shadow over the exhibit, the pieces of art are more about the courage to survive, than the resignation to succumb to the insidious disease.

Higher priority

"Survivors In Search of A Voice" is somewhat uneven in the quality of the pieces, ranging from a quiltwork to mixed media to photography. But the intent isn't necessarily focused on technical proficiency.

The aim of the exhibit is straight at the heart. Indeed, anyone with a pulse and a thimble of compassion will feel like they've swallowed a mouthful of sand, and had a choke-hold administered to their chest.

And if Amesbury had her way, everyone who walks through the exhibit would come away asking, "What can I do?"

Naturally, she has more than a few ideas.

"A 'Titanic' filled with cancer victims goes down every day," said Amesbury. "The life boat is prevention. It comes down to responsibility and social activism. Demand clean water, clean air and be responsible for your health."

The conflict, however, is that if more funds are earmarked for prevention, then cancer researchers and pharmaceutical companies could get less, she said. Several months ago, reminded Amesbury, the more mention that cancer was eradicated in a laboratory rat sent some pharmaceutical stocks soaring.

The race for a cure for cancer is not only highly speculative, but big business.

The nature of the war, according to Amesbury, is to convince the public that the way to cure cancer is to prevent it. That means to demand that cancer prevention education programs be placed at the highest priority on the national agenda.

Based on the way the tobacco companies responded to recent Congressional efforts to further regulate their advertising and liability, it's highly likely that the multinational drug corporations would mount a monumental lobbying strategy to have their way.

The first maneuver, said Amesbury, is to win a public relations battle. She considers "Survivors In Search of A Voice" an opening salvo to win over public conscience.

"What's great about being rich is that you can piss people off and not worry about being fired," she said.

An attitude? Amesbury carries an arsenal.

Monument to courage

Since drawing more than 200,000 people at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum after it premiered during three months in 1995, "Survivors In Search of A Voice" has been compared to the AIDS Quilt, Vietnam Memorial and the Holocaust Memorial.

Collectively, the 24 pieces fall somewhere between a liberating catharsis and a gut-wrenching depiction of the ravages of falling prey to cancer.

The exhibit, according to Amesbury, is dedicated to the generations of women who died

in silence — their stories untold. Appropriately, the exhibit has a strong narrative quality. Accompanied by the stories of 13 women with breast cancer, "Survivors, In Search Of A Voice" resounds with an intimate and urgent tone. (Only three of the 13 women are currently living.)

In "Operating," for instance, Nancy Jell's headscarf rug combines the sterile room of cold scalpels with the presence of warrior women. The notion of chemotherapy and a mastectomy are eerily similar to voodoo.

Several other pieces strike a deep chord. Colette Whitten's colored beads spelling "there, there" is a haunting reminder of the frustration of being placated; and Barbara Steinman's unfolding mirror with the words "Acceptance" and "Resistance" written on each end captures the profound ambivalence of dealing with cancer.

In one of the strongest pieces of the show, Barbara Cole's photographic triptych "Constant Reminder/Public Scrutiny/Body

Betrayal" reflects the physical and psychological transformation of living with breast cancer. The photographs depict a woman mourning the loss of her selfhood.

Similarly, in Susan Low-Beer's "Short Light, Long Dark" installation, the ravages of cancer take their toll as a woman loses a breast, then her hair and eventually, her identity.

But Low-Beer's message resounds provocatively: facing one's mortality will exact a toll, but doesn't always end tragically.

And perhaps that's why "Survivors, In Search Of A Voice" is not only a monument to courage, but a politically charged call-to-arms.

Just as the forces of life can defeat the onslaught of disease, "Survivors, In Search Of A Voice" inevitably offers hope in the face of death.

No excuses should be made. This is one political message that transcends art.

Graffiti from page C1

In the mid-1980s, Daze moved from outdoor graffiti art to more contained, but hardly less provocative, compositions on canvas. Most recently, he created a series of paintings based on the idiosyncratic characters who live and work at "Coney Island," the historic amusement park in New York.

Daze's Coney Island series and other recent paintings are currently on exhibit at the Masterpiece Gallery in downtown Birmingham.

While nearly all of the 20 paintings colorfully depict a seedy side of life, there is much that is redeemable — not to mention surrealistic — about the exhibit.

Born of the streets

In style and emotion, Daze combines neo-Expressionism with a heartfelt sensuality that portrays his subjects in a revealing but never degrading light.

"I'm more of an interpreter of

social life," he said. "I go to galleries and museums and don't see these people represented. I want to show them with dignity in my paintings."

Daze's subjects include on-the-edge characters straight from one of William Burroughs' bizarre novels, including tattooed, sex crazed, desolate dreamers with a gritty sense of survival and an appetite for inflated sensual pleasure.

At his best — when the paintings are less about narrative statements and more about composition — he captures the dazed (pun intended) sense of alienation in a Hopperesque way. Or he may suggest that the painting reflects a broader social milieu much in the manner of Thomas Hart Benton.

But make no mistake. The rush of yellow and reds and subject matter place Daze clearly in a contemporary tradition, born of the streets with an in-your-face sensibility.

Unlike artists who often include a resume to list their degrees, grants and artistic statement, Daze's curriculum vitae can be traced street by street, train by train.

"We didn't do (graffiti) painting for public acceptance, we did it for other artists," he said.

"It was our unofficial dialogue, a way to say, 'This is what I'm doing.'"

For a time, artists who began in graffiti had a marked influence on the more "acceptable" New York art world, particularly Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lee Quinones, and Keith Haring. For the most part, however, critics haven't been kind to graffiti artists, some of whom evolved to be known as outlaw artists, often dealing with apocalyptic themes in a highly illustrative style.

To his credit, Daze doesn't dwell on morbid themes. On the contrary, he is more focused on depicting the changing milieu of

people, albeit an evolving seediness.

Ironies foretold

While many of Daze's paintings offer a landscape of symbols to decode, the most stark irony may be the actual setting for the exhibit at Masterpiece Gallery.

First of all, there seems to be an incongruity in showing the work of a graffiti artist in a gallery specializing in antiques from the Biedermeier Empire.

Masterpiece is an elegantly designed space with marble floors and a pristine atmosphere of an exclusive upscale boutique. The gallery, which opened last August, received a historic preservation award for best commercial design from the city of Birmingham.

But first impressions can be misleading.

"We're trying to move outside the box in terms of what people think of as a gallery that sells antiques and fine art," said Georgia Nadhir, owner/director of the gallery.

Nadhir operates the gallery with lifelong friend Kimberly Salzman, both are Birmingham residents.

"The furniture made in the Biedermeier Empire was for the common man, and the fine art we show has the common man in mind, too."

But Daze's devilish "No Tell Motel" alongside a 250-year-old commode?

Coming off sold-out shows in Florence, Milan and Basel, Switzerland, who could argue with Nadhir and Salzman's decision to feature Daze in their first major exhibit.

Besides, the artist and gallery

owners agree that Americans have a tougher time accepting "challenging art" than Europeans.

"Art should be appreciated and accessible to everyone," said Nadhir. "There's a snobbish attitude in the art world. Some people are intimidated to walk into a gallery. But not here."

Of course, there are limitations.

Daze's risqué "Portrait of Heidi" is shown only by request, although no mention is made of the painting in the exhibit listing.

Apparently, the edgy subject is still considered more as graffiti than a painting that could hang in a gallery.

Maybe somewhere there's a train in need of a fresh coat of paint.

Garfunkel from page C1

And, most importantly, his life has been a free-form celebration of doing what you want to do. He's been a poet, an actor for distinguished directors and, in recent years, a walker.

In 1984, Garfunkel got the unusual idea to walk across America, which he did in 40 installments over a 12 year period.

"I did it for exercise," he says piously. "I don't want to get pretentious on you."

He said New York can be claustrophobic and confining, hard for a singer to get the exercise he needs.

"I love to walk. A singer needs to sing with the clouds around. I'm a romantic," he said. "I want to increase my lung power. So I put on my Sony Walkman, think about what I want to record. It fits a singer's reality."

Typically, Garfunkel walked for eight days at a stretch, about 100 miles.

He discovered the beauty of America first hand.

"West Virginia was beautiful. And the strip of Missouri, you have a meep, no one ever thinks about Missouri, but that's gorgeous American heartland. I crossed the Mississippi at Hannibal, Mark Twain's hometown. And the narrow stretch of Idaho in the mountains. Those three are my favorites," he said.

In April of 1998 he celebrated completion of his walk with a concert, appropriately, at Ellis Island's Registry Hall, where Garfunkel's Jewish ancestors had arrived from Rumania. The concert is commemorated in his live album "Across America."

"I'm walking Europe. I've already started in Ireland in May. It was great. I started writing about my trip, writing this long poem," he said.

He plans to march through Europe over the next eight years on his way to Istanbul.

Story

The story of Simon & Garfunkel is well chronicled. The boyhood friends from Queens first recorded as Tom & Jerry and had a minor hit with "Hey Schoolgirl." Years later, while Garfunkel pursued his education with an art history degree from Columbia and then a master's degree in architecture, the duo surfaced again as folk singers. While they were in Europe strumming acoustic guitars, an enterprising producer added an electric guitar track to "Sounds of Silence" and the friends were called back to promote their No. 1 hit record. Many more followed.

"If you asked what my hobby was, I'd say I'm a singer," he said. "In college I picked architecture. I thought I'd be an architect. But I dropped out when I realized it wasn't the answer to what I wanted to be. So I got together with my best friend Paul and we practiced and developed enough to get a recording contract and have a hit record and that's been my life."

Their first influence was the Everly Brothers, masters of close harmony.

"Paul was influenced by Elvis, but I wasn't. Enrico Caruso, Bing Crosby. He was the great

singer for me," Garfunkel said. "I was smitten by that and try to do that in all my records. Later on I got to love singers who could raise goosebumps like Roy Hamilton on 'Ebb Tide,' you hear a lot of that in 'Bridge Over Troubled Water.'"

Sam Cooke, Johnny Mathis, Billie Holiday and a jazz group called the HiLols all contributed to that special voice that Paul Simon said drew a crowd of girls to Garfunkel's bar mitzvah and helped win the duo its place in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

They broke up in 1970 but reunited for a memorable 1981 Central Park concert that drew 1 million people and a subsequent tour. Garfunkel said he didn't know what the future would be, but he hoped that it might include more singing with his "oldest and dearest friend."

Garfunkel has also published a book of poems, "Still Waters," that was well received, and received a Grammy-nominated album of children's songs, "Songs from a Parent to a Child." In the fall he will appear at Art Garfunkel's moose in the PBS cartoon series, "Arthur."

Clearly, Garfunkel's proudest achievement was the birth of his son James in 1990. James often joins his parents on stage.

"He loves his mom and dad and he found he has a good pitch, natural pitch, like me. Actually, singing is something we all can do but we learn to tighten up," Garfunkel said.

But singing has never been easier for anyone than it is for Art Garfunkel.

ART BEAT

NOMINATE MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO LOCAL ARTS SCENE

Nomination forms are available for the third annual Birmingham Bloomfield Cultural Arts Award.

The award is presented to the individual or organization who had the greatest impact on art and culture in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area during the past year.

Forms are available at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, The Community House of Birmingham and the Baldwin Library. Also, please look for nominating forms in the Eccentric newspapers.

Deadline for nominations is

Friday, July 31.

Last year, the award went to Birmingham resident John Cynar, co-creator of the Pontiac '97, a sculpture exhibit that brought together nearly 100 local artists. Marshall Fredericks received a lifetime achievement award.

The award will be announced in early September. The formal presentation will be made at the opening of the Birmingham Society of Women Painters Exhibit on Friday, Sept. 18 at the BBAC.

MEADOW BROOK HALL'S CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE SET FOR AUG. 2

The 20th annual Meadow

Brook Hall Concours d'Elegance sponsored by Chrysler takes place 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, August 2.

This year's Concours salutes Chrysler with a presentation of the most significant Chrysler automobiles in the history of the company. In addition, the Concours honors the 60th anniversary of the Forche.

The historic Chryslers and Forches will be shown along with 250 vintage and sports cars from around the world.

Admission is \$20 for adults; \$10 for teenagers 13-17; and, children under 13 are free.

For information, (248) 370-3140.

