

## Hope turns to speculation for museum

Perhaps it's the dog days of August. Maybe it's just a failure to adjust from summertime slumber to cold reality.

Doesn't matter. Speculation is in the air.

And as rumors go, this one is long overdue. Clearly, the tall-tale falls into the categories of "What if" and "Why not."

Although probably based more on wishful thinking than anything else, there is a growing off-the-record buzz about the possibility of a contemporary arts museum opening in southeastern Michigan.

The speculation is based on a story of a wealthy local real estate developer who allegedly bought several buildings on a block in downtown Detroit. The developer's supposed intention is to renovate the buildings to accommodate a collection of modern art.

In addition, as the story goes, the space will also be available for installations and exhibits by contemporary artists, including pieces by leading Detroit-area artists.

### Open debate

Granted, repeating—or publishing—hearsay usually falls in the domain of tabloid journalism. But this is one "rumor" that doesn't lead to idle or slanderous speculation.

Regardless of whether the rumor proves accurate, the issue of why there isn't a contemporary arts museum in metro Detroit should be considered in the light of these good economic times, and a widespread desire to redefine the "metro Detroit experience."

With the profound influx of capital in downtown Detroit for the building of two stadiums, three casinos and infrastructure improvements, there's a strong likelihood—albeit expectation—for a range of spin-off ventures, i.e., restaurants, theaters, housing, amusement parks.

Lost amid the debate about transforming the area's urban center into an entertainment hub is the opportunity to distinguish metro Detroit as a place where contemporary art has a niche alongside auto shows and sports events.

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
What do you think about a contemporary arts museum in metro Detroit?  
Where would you like to see it?  
Which artists and what type of art should be included?  
How should it be funded?  
**Write to:**  
Eccentric News-papers, Oakland County Arts Writer, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009.  
**Or e-mail your response to:** iproven-zano@oe.homes.com.net

While the Detroit Institute of Arts continues to prove that it is among the leading encyclopedic museums in the country, it only occasionally exhibits work of contemporary artists.

"Sure, we're encyclopedic in nature, but we set out to present the best example of art from all times and places," said Maurice Parrish, interim director at the DIA.

Yet for the most part, the DIA plans exhibits several years in advance. They couldn't be accused of responding to emerging art-world trends. The long-term planning is necessary to consolidate funding, and ensure coveted blockbuster appeal.

While last year's "Splendors of Ancient Egypt" and this year's "Angels From The Vatican"—both supported by large grants from the Chrysler Foundation—have proven to be remarkable, most see exhibits they present a critical understanding of the aesthetics of past cultures.

In contrast, contemporary art is typically created by artists responding to the milieu of the here and now. And usually, what results is art that defies neat definitions.

"The nature of contemporary art is that it takes chances," said Greg Witkop, director of Cranbrook Art Museum.

For the last several years, Cranbrook has served as the preeminent contemporary arts museum in the area. To a large extent, they have pushed the boundaries, exhibiting

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# ANGELS

A HEAVENLY DELIGHT

ARRIVE AT THE DIA

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER

**F**abio Piacentini carefully unwraps the 18th century chalice, one of 106 objects in "The Invisible Made Visible: Angels From the Vatican" exhibition opening Aug. 23 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

As a conservator for the Vatican Museums and Pontifical Galleries, Piacentini is the only one permitted to touch the paintings, reliefs, ceramics, sculpture, liturgical vessels and vestments, and tapestries after their removal from the sixteenth-century wooden crates scattered throughout the galleries.

The priceless works by Raphael, Fra Angelico and Veronese must be handled with care. The exhibition of art works and artifacts, from the 9th century B.C. to the 20th century, represents the challenge for artists to render visible angels and winged beings which are by their nature invisible.

After unwrapping the gilded silver chalice with three-dimensional sculptures of angels encircling the base, Piacentini dons surgical gloves before inspecting it for damage that might have occurred

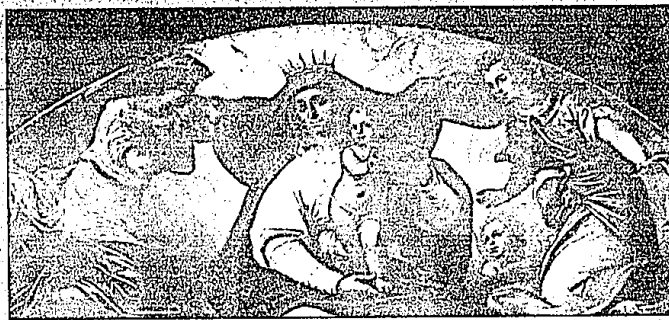


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

**Heavenly hosts:** Originally situated above the portal of the church of S. Onofrio in Rome, the oil "Madonna Crowned with the Christ Child and Angels" was painted by Claudio Ridolfi in 1600 following a model by Paolo Veronese. This elaborate reliquary (below) from the 17th century frames the oldest known image of Christ. According to legend, this image was thought to be miraculously imprinted on cloth, not painted by the human hand.

during transport. Piacentini then checks every angle surrounding the stem and cup against a photograph.

Iva Lisikewycz, DIA associate curator of European painting, waits for the words "no change in condition" from Piacentini. The chalice, from one of the greatest collections of Classical and Renaissance art in the world, traveled from Rome by air then

was trucked to UCLA's Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center in Los Angeles and the St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri before arriving at its only Midwest venue. From the DIA, the exhibition travels to the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore and the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Fla., before returning to Rome.

"Many of these items are not on

view at the Vatican or can only be viewed at the 18 Vatican museums," said Lisikewycz, explaining why the exhibit is not to be missed, especially for those unable to travel to Rome. "The fact many of these pieces have been restored for the exhibit by American donors to Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums makes this an

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## The Invisible Made Visible: Angels From The Vatican

**WHAT:** An exhibition of more than 100 rare works of art and artifacts from the 9th century B.C. to the 20th century by Raphael, Fra Angelico, Veronese, Georges Rouault, Salvador Dali, and the workshop of Bernini.

**WHEN:** Aug. 23 to Oct. 18. Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays, until 10 p.m. Friday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays.

**WHERE:** Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Avenue.

**COST:** Timed tickets (includes Acoustiguide audio tour) are \$10

adults, \$5 children, Founders Society members free; Friday night tickets are \$15 adults, \$10 children, members of all ages \$5, and available by calling (248) 645-6666, members call (313) 833-8499.

**Related activities and exhibits:** Lecture by Rev. Allen Duston, O.P., Vatican director of the exhibition, on how the exhibit was conceived and the preparations for sending the exhibit abroad 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 22-23 in the Lecture Hall. Lecture by Rev. Terrence Dempsey,

founding director of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art at St. Louis University, on contemporary American artists renewed interest in spiritual and religious dimensions 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 19-20 in the Lecture Hall.

"Spirited Wings," a decent guided tour of images in the DIA's permanent collection is available to all groups including students grades three and up, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Wednesdays-Sundays, call (313) 833-7981.

## FESTIVAL

## Legendary folk/pop singers join in Newport celebration

During its 40-year run, the Newport Folk Festival has introduced fledgling acts such as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan (with an electric guitar, no less), and Joni Mitchell, while also playing host to veterans.

To celebrate its four decades, festival organizers are taking it on the road during which veterans and newcomers will join forces.

Legendary folk/pop singers such as Baez, Nancy Griffith, John Hiatt, The Staple Singers, and Rickie Lee Jones will join the afternoon act The Violent Femmes, relative youngsters Marc Cohn, Wilco, Rodney Crowell and the Brit pop act Arrol on Saturday, Aug. 22, at Pine Knob Music Theatre.

Loudon Wainwright will emcee the event.

"So what I'll be doing is going out and maybe doing a couple songs while setting up for various people. Hopefully I'll be killing time in a somewhat entertaining fashion," Wainwright explained.

"I enjoy it. It's kind of like precision bombing in a sense. You've got 10 min-

utes and you've got to hold them and set them up for the next people."

If his albums are any indication, Wainwright will prove to be an amiable host. His 15th album, "Little Ship" (Virgin), opens with the sprightly "Breakfast in Bed" during which he keeps his trademark humor in check—"When I'm on your empty stomach it must mean I'm in the mood" ... "In bed like John and Yoko/We're givin' peace a chance/All that we are saying is where's my underpants?"

But "Little Ship" navigates toward the darker side of relationships tracing the end of his love affair that inspired his 1995 album "Grown Man."

"The album kind of tracks a relationship. It begins kind of excitedly and happily with 'Breakfast in Bed.' But it was a relationship that eventually failed," said Wainwright who previously hosted a BBC music show filmed in Scotland.

"After years of relationships, one can become pessimistic. I do kind of believe the world is a terrible place. But it's also beautiful and interesting and

delightful and cruel and terrible and scary. You can pick up the newspaper and see that. I wasn't trying to be dark. I was trying to tell it like it is."

"I Can't Stand Myself" is telling with verses like "there's someone out there just imperfect for me/There must be some kind of waitress/I could lure on to my mattress."

In "The World" Wainwright sings "there's no good news this world's useless/I'm outta here/It's my goal/because the world is a crappy old hole."

"I thought it would be funny to sing about how terrible things are and play the banjo, which is kind of a happy instrument in folk music," said Wainwright.

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Various genres: The Newport Folk Festival isn't limited to that genre. The roots rock band Wilco, above, will dig deep into its collection of Woody Guthrie songs it recorded with Billy Bragg. Loudon Wainwright, left, will emcee the event which begins at 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22, at Pine Knob Music Theatre.