

## CONVERSATIONS

FRANK PROVENZANO

### Opening the public debate on proposed Troy development

By the end of the day, next Friday, April 9, some contend the debate will begin in earnest on the proposed public-private development near I-75 and Big Beaver in Troy. Of course, it's likely that the debate will continue behind closed doors as Troy's Downtown Development Authority gets its first look at four bids from private developers interested in constructing a 3,000-5,000-seat theater that would compete with The Fox, Music Hall and Fisher Theater. Also included in the development (estimated as high as \$167 million) are a conference center, residential housing and on-site retail outlets. To put it mildly, the development could potentially transform the cultural landscape of Oakland County, and possibly downtown Detroit. Until now, however, there's only been speculation and skepticism. What's needed is a more critical public debate.

### Impact study needed

Despite the prevailing view from the pro-development side, rising concerns certainly isn't a sign of opposition. On the contrary, it's an appeal for a reasonable discussion about what Troy will look like 20 years from now.

That's the view of Allan Brown, a former Birmingham resident, who is an arts industry consultant for AMS Planning and Research in Fairfield, Conn.

Brown conducts feasibility studies primarily for nonprofits and municipalities typically contemplating building performing arts centers. He emphasizes that for public-private ventures to succeed an impact study needs to be conducted. The study reveals key consumers, year-round use of the space as well as an educated guess on the impact on other venues in a current market.

Lessons learned

The study also examines comparable arenas and facilities to determine how a proposed venture would perform. Thus far, little - if any - mention has been made of the performing arts center in Cerritos, Calif., a comparable city with a huge tax base like Troy's.

That facility located in northern Orange County is city-owned and operated by a nonprofit. Until now, the city of Troy has contended that only a private developer could successfully run the proposed theater complex.

And what about the discussion of the \$200-million performing arts center in Miami, of which \$210 million were public funds? Or the success of the newly opened \$170-million art center in Newark, N.J., financed mostly by public funds?

No doubt private developers bring a lot to the table. Especially, much-needed capital and expertise. But most private developers make decisions based on self-interest.

No one should expect them to consider the long-term picture of what Troy's identity will be in 20 years. Clearly, that's what the city officials should be doing.

Taking a gamble?

"Tastes in entertainment are diversifying," said Brown. "Culture is evolving rapidly and people are searching for different ways to be entertained."

That should encourage those who wonder if Troy needs to construct another big-time venue. Yet it's not the time for a knee-jerk response.

"It's unusual for a major market to sustain two Broadway series," said

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## HANDLE WITH CARE...and respect

### MICHIGAN GLASS MONTH OFFERS EXHIBITS, LECTURES, DEMOS

BY FRANK PROVENZANO

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Ambassador of glass: Ferdinand Hampson, (below), owner/director of Habatat Galleries, presents the 27th Annual International Glass Invitational, a look at the emerging trends in glass artistry.

Even after 27 stable - and, thankfully, nonshattering - years of dealing in the most fragile of art forms, Ferdinand Hampson still gets a bit nervous when moving any of the glass sculptures at Habatat Galleries.

This week, Hampson of West Bloomfield will frequently repeat the phrase, "Handle with care," to his staff as they unpack and display more than 350 pieces of glass art made by 75 artists in the 27th International Glass Invitational, which opens April 8 at the downtown Pontiac gallery.

The exhibit will draw up to 10,000 people during the month, and is billed as the biggest-selling show of contemporary glass anywhere in the world. A full-color catalog published by Habatat serves as both documentation of the state of the art, and a high-end shopping guide. (Most pieces are in the five-figure range.)

That's quite a ways from the initial invitational exhibit in 1972 that featured 12 artists who shaped goblets and vases.

The Invitational is among the many exhibits, artists demonstrations and lectures occurring throughout the state over the next four weeks in celebration of Michigan Glass Month.

### The reckoning

With a sense of wonder and awe, Hampson runs his hand along a crystallized surface of a large-scale figurative sculpture that arrived early for the exhibit. He's somewhat bewildered that anyone would challenge the notion of glass sculpture as a fine art on the level of painting and sculpture.

And he's more than prepared

to challenge anyone who constrains glass sculpture as simply a "craft" or decorative art.

As a diplomat for glass artistry who has set up exhibits in western Europe and the Far East, Hampson has proclaimed the current evolutionary stage of the art form as the "age of recognition."

Since the inception of the glass movement in the 1960s, the exploration of technique of the 1970s, and the refinement of sculptural concepts in the 1980s, it's time for glass art to move beyond the perception of a stepchild of the fine arts, said Hampson.

The reckoning has arrived. Essentially, the Invitational is the glass world's equivalent of the Whitney Biennial. Of course, Hampson is reluctant to make any comparisons to the every-other-year survey of contemporary art exhibited at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York. But few would argue that the International provides the best comprehensive look at the direction of glass artistry.

### Thinking big

"Continuity is important," said Hampson. "We invite a nucleus of artists who are responsible for defining glass in terms of the sheer skill of their work, and as fine artists."

The nucleus includes Dale Chihuly, Stanislav Lonsky, Jaroslava Brychtova, Lucio Bubacco, William Morris, Mary Shaffer, José Chardiet, Dan Dailley, David Huchthausen, Richard Ritter, Herb Babcock (who teaches at Center for Creative Studies), and Albert Young (owner of Michigan Hot Glass Studio in Pontiac).

Because of reputation and ability to push the boundaries of

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| <p><b>Michigan Glass Month</b></p> <p>■ Alfred Berkowitz Gallery - "Flameworking: a Shane Ferro retrospective and selected works from the glass workshop instructors." University of Michigan-Dearborn, 4901 Evergreen, Dearborn, (313) 593-5058, through May 2.</p> <p>■ Flameworking demonstrations during artist reception 5-8 p.m. Friday, April 9.</p> <p>■ Donna Galleries - "1999 Cool Women, Hot Glass/Hot Women, Cool Glass," April 3-May 3, 117 S. Main, Royal Oak, (248) 546-8810.</p> <p>■ Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center - "Clearly Sculpture," April 9-May 7, 1516 S. Cranbrook Road, (248) 644-0866.</p> <p>■ Canterbury Stained Glass, "Ron Rae: A 20-</p> | <p>year Retrospective," and "The Best of Michigan Glass Competition '99," through May 1, 1067 E. Long Lake Rd., Troy, (248) 619-9172.</p> <p>■ Carol James Gallery - "For the Love of Glass," April 2-May 1, 301 S. Main, Royal Oak, (248) 541-6607.</p> <p>■ Center for Creative Studies - "A Glass Passport II," exhibit of student work, 301 E. Franklin, Detroit, (313) 664-7600, through April 10.</p> <p>■ Detroit Institute of Arts - "Glass, Glass, Glass," an exhibit of 70 pieces of 20th-century studio glass, 5200 Woodward, Detroit, (313) 833-1851, through April 30.</p> <p>■ Gallery XVII - "Woman in Motion," April 8-30, 18 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, (248) 745-8545.</p> <p>■ Habatat Galleries - "27th Annual International Glass Invitational," April 8-May 8, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, (248) 333-2060.</p> <p>■ Jewish Community Center - "Retrospective of work by Ricky Bernstein and Sidney Hunger," through April 29, 5600 W. Lake Rd., West Bloomfield, (248) 661-7641.</p> <p>■ Michigan Hot Glass Workshop, April 3-8, 29 W. Lawrence St., Pontiac, (248) 338-3455.</p> <p>■ Prism Contemporary Glass Gallery - "A Glass Act '99," Solving through April, 19 N. Saginaw, (248) 333-0333.</p> <p>■ Uzelec Gallery - "Interpretations in Glass," April 10-May 8, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, (248) 332-5257.</p> |
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## Jazz vocalist 'child of Miles Davis'

BY HUGH GALLAGHER

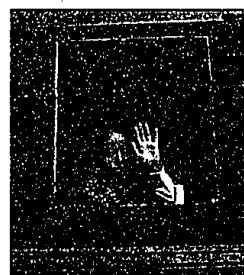
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When Cassandra Wilson describes the influence Miles Davis had, she could be describing herself.

"Miles was unafraid to break the rules, he pushed the envelope, he believes in evolving, constantly developing new ideas, incorporating the everyday experiences into his music, current but looking back. It's expansive. I could go on and on," she said by phone, unconsciously referring to the late trumpet master as if he were still alive, as his music certainly is.

That music, a sound instantly recognized even by those who don't follow jazz, is the inspiration for Wilson's new album, "Traveling Miles" on Blue Note. Wilson takes music composed by or interpreted by Davis and performs it in her own unique style while paying homage to the soulful, introspective



Miles fan: Cassandra Wilson explores the music of Miles Davis.

quality that was Miles Davis. She also contributes lyrics to some famous Davis tracks and adds some original songs in Davis' style.

On April 3, Wilson and her sextet perform music from "Traveling Miles," her acclaimed "New Moon Daughter" and some recent compositions to Eastern Michigan University's Pease Auditorium.

Wilson has become the leading female jazz vocalist.

December she was voted No. 1 jazz vocalist for the fifth year in a row by Down Beat readers. She has drawn deeply from the well of jazz singers from Billie Holiday to Abbey Lincoln to Betty Carter, and she has also taken from folk-pop singers that were her first inspirations, particularly Joni Mitchell.

But, she believes, Miles was the first musician she heard growing up in Mississippi.

"I was listening to him from an early age. I was listening when I was 5 or 6 years old and the first things you hear

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## SHOWCASING ART

### Images from a contemporary Russia

BY FRANK PROVENZANO

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Reality is never quite what it seems to be.

That, of course, might be the most profound understatement of the 20th century when referring to the psychotic state of denial present in the former Soviet Union.

Despite the edict to conform to the state-sponsored sensibilities of "socialist realism," many artists inside the Soviet system found ways to elevate art beyond the constraints of communist ideology.

Since the Soviet Union crumbled in 1991, several artists have been in the fore-

front of redefining a new realism, moving beyond socialist propaganda to depict contemporary Russian life. In what Debra Watson, manager of the Meadow Brook Art Gallery, calls a "gallery coup," the paintings of several of those leading artists are on exhibit at Oakland University.

"A New Russian Realism" features a first-over collaboration among the campus gallery, the OU department of art history and the Maya Palsky Gallery of Chicago, a private gallery which represents the three artists in the exhibit - Natalya Nesterova, Vasily Shulzhenko and the late Sergei Shershiuk.

### A contemporary urgency

Based on the quality of technique, compelling subject matter and high international profile of the artists, the exhibit marks a new direction for Meadow Brook, according to Watson.

That's not to say that the gallery will move away from exhibits of students' work, showing pieces owned by local

private collectors, nor from serving as a suburban annex that displays items from the Detroit Institute of Arts permanent collection.

But to its credit, "A New Russian Realism" offers a provocative slice-of-life that inspires an exploration of both contemporary Russian culture and distinctive views of everyday life.

Curated by Tamara Machmut-Jhashi, "A New Russian Realism" combines a contemporary urgency with an engaging overview of distinctive trends in realism in a society where such depictions once could have sent the artists to the gulag to be "rehabilitated."

"The intention is to present work in a historical context that fits with the educational aims of the university," said Machmut-Jhashi, an assistant professor of art history at OU. "It's a way to educate and inform."

Of course, in "A New Russian Real-

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What: "A New Russian Realism," the works of Natalya Nesterova, Vasily Shulzhenko and Sergei Shershiuk  
Where: Through Sunday, April 11  
Where: Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Wilson Hall, Oakland University campus, Rochester Hills, (248) 370-3005



Cruise speed: Artist Vasily Shulzhenko's "On the Boat Along the Oka River" depicts the banality of Russian life.