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ism" there's more at stake than a review of the past seven decades of Russian history.

"Today, with the collapse of the ruble, Russian artists are truly suffering," said Machmut-Jhushi, who traveled to the eastern Asia country two years ago.

Ironically, the burden of succeeding in the competitive international art world has replaced the pressures of state censorship for many Russian artists, she said.

Stripped of ideology, the lurking KGB and propped-up state-owned industries, today's Russia depicted in the paintings of Nestorova, Shulzhenko and Shor-stiuk is an existential landscape of alienation, isolation and

nihilism.

A circus-like atmosphere of "anything goes," rendered in Shorstiuk's hyperrealism, reveals the reality behind superficial appearances of Russian life. While the style is similar to the photorealism of American artists Richard Estes and Chuck Close, there's a striking psychological intimacy in Shorstiuk's view of a world falling out of balance.

While Shorstiuk and Nestorova's work are more reflective and personal, Schulzhenko's paintings present the starkest depiction of the hollow soul of today's Russia.

In four large-scale canvases, Schulzhenko shows the mundane reality of Russian life, the vacu-

ity of a land without a recent spiritual heritage and a culture of gangsterism and widespread hedonism.

In "Crucifixion," he has perhaps captured the metaphor for the current painful transition in Russian life. Hanging from a cross in the painting is an emaciated peasant. At his feet sit a group of drunks, who sleep and eat on the same ground where they defecate.

That type of dark sentiment wouldn't have gotten past Soviet censors. But in today's Russia, Schulzhenko powerfully makes the point about the spiritual vacuum in a society experimenting with freedom and limited capitalism.

Certainly, the mundane expression on the faces of two boat travelers in Schulzhenko's "On the Boat Along the Oka River," and the indifferent expressions on the naked females bathing in an industrial swampland in "The Bathers" doesn't offer much hope for a cultural renewal.

But then, that may not be Schulzhenko's purpose. After all, before a deep wound can heal, a catharsis must occur. Coming to terms with the past is a beginning.

As anyone knows who lived through the nightmares of Soviet totalitarianism, facing reality should never be taken for granted.

Conversations from page C1

Brown, who contends metro Detroit is comparable to the Houston and Denver areas.

What's to say that metro Detroit can't be that "unusual" situation?

The wildcard seems to be whether metro Detroit can be transformed into a destination place like Chicago and Toronto.

Apparently, many developers believe that the three casinos in downtown Detroit will attract people from around the country. Even if gamblers congregate at the casinos, it still doesn't bode well for the likely success of an entertainment venue in the suburbs.

"Casinos take audiences away from other entertainment venues," said Brown. "People who gamble aren't the same people who attend arts events. Besides, casinos are intended to be self-contained."

In Topeka, Kan., according to Brown, a once wildly popular performing arts center is all but dead since the building of a nearby casino.

Ask critical questions

After talking with Brown, a

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Allan Brown
consultant

few questions come to mind: Why hasn't the City of Troy sanctioned its own study, independent from the private developers?

And why hasn't the city cited any models where public-private ventures have succeeded, or learned from the mistakes where they've failed?

On April 9, we'll begin to see what private developers have in mind for the construction of a multi-million-dollar destination site at I-76 and Big Beaver.

As the plans are reviewed, let's hope that all the critical questions are asked.

Jazz from page C1

have the most influence," she said.

She has called herself a "child of Miles Davis" and it can be heard in the slow tempos, the smoky vocals, the extended quiet. But it was another trumpeter, Wynton Marsalis, who suggested that Wilson explore Davis' music for a tribute at New York's Lincoln Center for the Arts.

"So I did six nights at the Lincoln Center and that's when we had the idea for doing the album," Wilson said. The album opens impressively with "Run the Voodoo Down," with music from "Bitches Brew" and Old Dars playing his cornet Miles style. Wilson's vocal is deep, rich. Her lyrics are spare, expressive, conjuring up the languid, country blues of the deep (very deep) south.

Wilson's lyrics have this quality of expressing a lot in a few words and with little sentimentality. Take this lyric from

"Traveling Miles" in tribute to Davis' electric influence: "born with the lightning and thunder/sound descending proud and bright/restless as the winging soul of the night"

"I look for experience, something in my life I can use to get inside the music," she said. "It's almost always tied to some feeling, emotion I can tap into."

Though the album features Dars and saxophonist Steve Coleman, it is string instruments that make the most intriguing interplay with Wilson's voice (including Detroit violinist Regina Carter on one track). This comes naturally as her father was the late Herman Powell, a guitarist-bassist, though he never taught her to play.

"I don't believe I saw him perform, but there were always instruments around," she said. "... I had six years of piano and had gotten tired of it. I started to play guitar and he threw a cou-

ple books at me and said here, figure it out. But it was done to reignite my passion for music."

It was a passion she originally pursued as a folk singer at coffeehouses in Mississippi and Arkansas while studying mass communications at Jackson State University. The folk influence is still strong, despite the sniffling of some jazz purists.

"I don't let it interfere anymore," she said about such criticism. "I used to. I was embarrassed by my feelings about folk music, but it was an important part of my development."

She began to pursue a jazz singing career when her career in television stalled. She said she had a job in New Orleans but found herself unemployed when she followed her now ex-husband to New Jersey.

She began to listen to jazz singers and in New York she frequented the jazz clubs. In the January Jazziz magazine she tells a story about going to see

jazz maverick Betty Carter, who died last year. She said she went to hear Carter sing in Chicago and asked her, between sets, if she would teach her how to become a jazz singer. She said Carter told her bluntly, coldly, "You just do it. What have you got to lose?"

After dealing with bruised feelings, Wilson used the advice as a challenge which led to her successful career and abiding respect for Carter.

"She was a trailblazer, a real role model for young singers. She was a band leader who had a school. Musical talent ran through her band. She was as important as Art Blakey at that. But mostly she was about women taking control of the music," Wilson said.

Cassandra Wilson is one woman who has "taken control of the music" as she and her husband, under musical director and bassist Lonnie Plaxico, will demonstrate Saturday.

Glass from page C1

glass art, Chihuly's work always draws the most attention. As the Picasso of glass and one of the most famous artists in the world, Chihuly has single-handedly raised awareness of the possibilities of sculpting molten into crystallized forms.

In addition to Chihuly's huge and distinctive chandeliers, the large-scale works of Stephen Edwards and Martin Blank's figurative sculptures will also likely draw critical and popular acclaim.

Material outreach

By holding the Invitational in Pontiac rather than at Habitat's other locations in Chicago or Boca Raton, Hampton has hoped to draw attention to the strong crafts movement in Michigan.

That movement has been particularly sustained by Cranbrook Art Academy's international reputation along with glass instruction and art appreciation pro-


grams at local art associations such as the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center.

Next Friday, April 9, the BBAC will exhibit works by nine established glass artists in "Clearly Sculpture." The exhibit will be in the BBAC's Robinson Gallery.

During the last year, the BBAC expanded its exhibit schedule to include works by professional artists along with student and community-based artists.

In effect, the broader range of art on exhibit is intended to promote local artists while educating the general public on high artistic standards, said Janet Torno, executive director of the BBAC.

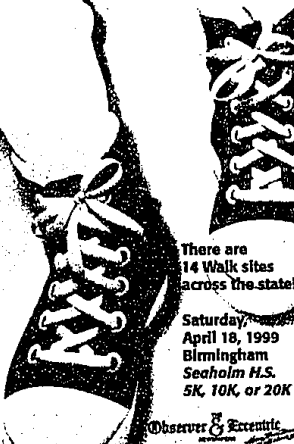
In the past year, the BBAC has exhibited a video installation by Pontiac artist Terry Lee Dill, and a wall painting by Sol LeWitt.



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