# Shahn from page C1

Even though Shahn put his art education on hold to work as a lithographer to help support four younger siblings, he eventually attended New York University. City College of New York and the National Academy of design. He later traveled to Paris to study art.

study art. Shahn's works in the DIA exhibition are as relevant today as they were when he painted them.

them.
"Allegory" with its red llon and pile of dead children symbolizes the suffering of African American Jim Hickman.
"In 'Allegory' Shahn refers to Jim Hickman living in a tenement in Chicago and his family who perish in a fire believed the set by the landlord," and Rebecca Hart, assistant curator

of Modern and Contemporary
Art at the DIA. "Shahn's work
was always about social injustice, the plight of the working
man, his belief in moral action
and moral life. The exhibition's a
reconsideration of Ben Shahn as
a modernist not as a social realist which has the connotation of
propaganda art. Shahn is much
more than that."
The exhibition may reconsider
Shahn as a modernist paintor
but his themes of social injustice
prevail throughout the five galleries.

"Shahn's taking war experi-

leries.
"Shahn's taking war experiences and Jewish experiences and applying it in a universal way for social justice," said Hart.
"As a WPA photographer, Shahn's job was to document the devastation of the Great Depression."

### Religious influences

Religious influences
Throughout Shahn's life his
Jowish heritage and traditions
also influenced his work.

"By 1930, he eschowed ritual
observance of Judaism but the
tradition stayed with him, the
storytolling and the moral
action," said Hart. "In Now
York," painted from a photo of a
fish market and an orthodox
Jewish man, Shahn is moving
away from realism. It becomes
sort of a dream or a memory."

### Allegory and symbolism

By 1943, Shahn was working with the Office of War Information designing posters, but his own painting had shifted from political issues to universal issues, which focused on the individual. An Italian landscape

which is surreal in nature, whows the experience affected him deeply.

"At this point, Shahn's one of the few people privileged to have access to photes of what's happening in Europe," said Hart.
"He sees some of the first documents of the Holecaust. He decides to the decides to Holecaust. He decides to the fores to it in an allegorical way."

Among Hart's favorites is "Study for Clarinet and Tin Horn" from the DiA's permanent collection. Painted in 1951, the work refers to the agony a musician goes through when creating. Here, he sits imprisoned by a row of horns, his head invisible. "Shahn's trying to talk about the intensity of creativity, He's talking about high and low art

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with the rew of clarinots and a carnivalesque horn. The artist is in agony," said Hart.
At a time when self expression was dominant, Shahn reached international recognition when the Museum of Modern Art chose him to represent the U.S., along with Abstract Expression; at Willem de Kooning, at the Venice Blennale in 1954.
"Shahn was a representational

ist whiem de Kooning, at the Vexice Biomale in 1954.

"Shahn was a representational ratist," said Hart. "Critics after the war tended to disregard him. Shahn decides to put emotional content into a single figure and tell the story. One of my other favorities is 'Age of Anxiety' (1953) because it speaks to the development of the Atom Bomb. This was a time of McCarthyism, a time when Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed for

allegedly solling atomic secrets to the Soviets. A woman with an x-ray body looks like she's preg-nant and posos the question what happens to our children."

Saga of the Lucky Dragon

Saga of the Lucky Dragon
Shahn's Saga of the Lucky
Dragon, with its obscurely
placed fire dragons or hydrogen
beasts, are also favorites of Hart.
"These Japanese fisherman
are awakened by the "saun" rising
in the west them "death ash"
descends on their beat. They collect it and bring it back to
Japan. Shortly thereafter the
radio man is the first to die,"
said Hart. "I'm taken at how
beautiful Shahn's paintings are.
They're just as topical as they
were 40 to 50 years ago because
he's inade these universal. They
touch a chord in people."

# Conversations from page C1

But there's little doubt that the art is appreciated for what it conjures, rather than what is

conjures, rather than what is rundered.
"Just like cars, the art some times brings (collectors) back to the point in their life where things weren't as complicated," said Smith, who also collects antique cars and readily recalls his first job out of high school working at a Triumph dealer.

Since high school, Smith has wanted a well-preserved Ferrari. Two years ago, he made his

atch.
"It's not only drop-dead gorgeous, but it's exhibarating to drive."

Just a car? Right, And Marilyn

Monroe was just an actress. Heart and soul

Generally, collectors of auto-

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mobile-inspired art also fill their garages with antique cars.

"It's more common for car art to be seattered through the house, not just where the cars are collected, said Smith.

"This art should be appreciated by everyone."

The combination of the population of the population of the population of the population of the population.

The combination of the popularity of auto racing and the utility of cars, Smith believes, will further create an appreciation for car art.

To think that the pictures of

scantily clad women posing for calendars used to be the only "art" on the walls of car collec-

tors.
"Like car worth collecting, (the art) has to come from the heart and soul."

and soul."
That, of course, is part of the ultimate dream ride.
Local participating artists are Tom Hale of Farmington Hills, and Gerald Freeman of South-

field.
Frank Provenzano can be reached at (248) 901-2557, or fprovenzano@oe. homecomm.nct

attending classical music con-

certs.
"Tve always approached classical music from the audience's perspective," said Spisto, whose participation in the arts includes acting and directing in summer stock during his undergraduate years at the University of Wisconsin and during graduate studies at the University of Notro Dame, where he carned an MBA in arts administration.
In the upcoming season, Spisto

In the upcoming season, Spisto proudly points out, the DSO will begin a program intended to educate adults on the history of

music.
With the DSO's 1999-2000 season set, the expanded schedule of summer concerts at Meadow Brook selling beyond expectations, a new managoment team hired, and the Orchestra Hall expansion in place, at least Spisto's departure comes when the momentum is increasing.

"It would have been preferable to see things through for another

couple years, but I think there's a strong purpose and under-standing about the programs for the next five years," he said.

## A logical decision

A logical decision Spite, 42, made it clear that he didn't initially approach ABT and that at one point he withdrew from any consideration. When ABT persisted, he realized that going back home was a "logical decision."

teat decision."

To live within walking distance of ABT e offices in Manhatan – and a short drive to visit his family – was simply irresistible. In the end, it was the strong pull to go back to New York."

Nothing personal, Detroit. Indeed, the strong relationships forged with DSO board members, he said, made it an especially difficult decision.

ciany difficult decision.

"It wasn't easy," he said. "I've had many good relationships here. But it was clear, and then there's the fact that ABT is at the peak of their game."

### Bittersweet

While the DSO's 76-member board is a Who's Who of the cor-

porate world, it wasn't until Spisto applied his marketing wizardry that one of the region's most prestigious cultural institu-tions began to appear more spir-ted.

ited.

In addition to the 200-plus yearly events at Orchestra Hall and nearby venues, under Spistr's loadership the DSO has expanded its educational programs while elevating its role ahaping the cultural renaissance of downtown Detroit.

If there were any doubt of Spiato's vigor and zeal, it would be dispelled by the many public photos, where he's smiling broadly with mayors, corporate executives and marquee musi-cians who have performed at Orchestra Hall.

"I have a doop love for the orchestra," he said. "I always felt like I could excite people."

Unfortunately, in his final weeks at the DSO, Spisto will have more time for lunch and farewells.

The minister of arts might be moving to New York, but he leaves behind a congregation that is alive and well.

Going home is bittersweet.







