

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Rain, Dubuffet and the drip, drip, drip of life

"Read only your own life and from this understand the hieroglyphs of universal life."
— Nietzsche

A few days before one of the most impressive exhibits in his gallery's four-year history, and David Klein can barely contain himself.

Although Klein — the youngest gallery owner in a district of fine-art spaces in Birmingham — always manages to demonstrate enthusiasm for exhibits, this time it's different. There's an audible anxiety.

In the intimate gallery space where an exhibit of Jean Dubuffet's art will hang, sheets of plastic covering are spread on the floor.

From above, drops of condensation fall into a bucket. A leaky roof? Hey, this is an art gallery. Call it a drum beat of the existential pull of time.

"I'm not even going to think about it," said Klein as he looks into the bucket collecting drops of water. There's an art to denial, too.



True grit: David Klein next to a work by Jean Dubuffet.

Unfortunately, the current exhibit isn't conceptual art, but a display of the intricate and gritty work of an artist who went back to first principles and reinvented art as a form of self-exploration.

Focused in

Dubuffet's work has been called primitive, simple and mindless doodling.

But watching Klein stand before Dubuffet's work, there's obviously another interpretation.

"They reveal, and they don't reveal. Beneath the grittiness there's a deepness."

He steps back, convinced that he's described the inherent paradox: Dubuffet makes the simple complex and the complex simple.

In Nietzschean terms, Dubuffet was among those post World War II artists who traveled

inward to grasp the hieroglyphs of their own life.

In a century distinguished by unprecedented violence and inhumanity as well as profound scientific innovations and unimaginable growth of personal wealth, Dubuffet set his sights on the target of 20th-century psychosis: the human psyche.

No ordinary view

Unlike many abstract artists, Dubuffet's work seldom forgets the human figure. Although distorted and usually beneath a web of lines and color, the basic form exists as a lost child.

The 13-piece Dubuffet, gathered mostly from local collectors, requires patience, and an historical understanding.

Dubuffet wasn't the typical, formally trained artist. He left his wife business in 1942 to begin a painting career. At the time, the German army was occupying his Paris home. And the Nazis were terrorizing Jews and Allied supporters.

There were no ordinary views of life. People like Jean Paul Sartre examined the social ills and moral imperative of the time.

Considered within that kaleido-

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OBSERVATIONS FROM AN EXISTENTIAL TOLL BOOTH

Pun: Lynch's title, "Still Life in Milford," isn't the obvious euphemism but a way to catch critics off guard.



Undertaker, acclaimed poet Thomas Lynch to give keynote address at OU conference

By FRANK PROVENZANO
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Early October in Milford, and the reddish-orange of autumn begins to descend. Running along the path of historic brownstone homes, the Huron River provides a relentless reminder of the town's long, steady 166-year history.

Unlike the harried way of life in the more cluttered suburbs, time moves along a casual continuum in Milford.

And for the last 25 years, poet Thomas Lynch has had more than a casual bird's-eye view of the most profound day-to-day changes in a town that could be located on the literary landscape alongside Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon as a place that time forgot.

Beaming with a boyish curiosity, the mannerly Lynch is the consummate conversationalist, ready with a firm handshake and a piercing yet reassuring look that reveals he's on your side.

It's no wonder Lynch is the kind of person who many in Milford have called in the middle of the night when the question arises of what to do when a loved one has died.

When he's not managing a rhythmic line into a poetic verse, Lynch oversees the burial rites of the town folk as funeral director at Lynch & Sons, several blocks from Milford's business district.

Despite his recent meteoric rise in the international literary world since last year's publishing of "The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade," a National Book Award nominated collection of essays about the funeral business, Lynch is quite explicit about his life's work.

"I could win the Nobel Prize for literature, and it wouldn't matter if I didn't bury people the right way."

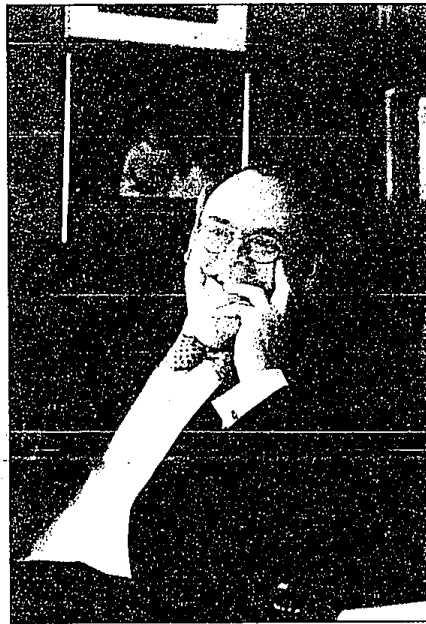
The way Lynch is going these days, he could accomplish both.

Homespun wisdom

This Saturday, Lynch will deliver the keynote address at the 37th Annual Writers' Conference at Oakland University.

Lynch will join a host of the area's most recognized authors in a two-day series of lectures and workshops in what has become, arguably, the highest-profile writers' conference in

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STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBFIELD

Consummate conversationalist: Author Thomas Lynch's poems and essays have attracted critics and an international readership.

WHAT: 37th Annual Writers' Conference, a program of 36 presentations on writing, sponsored by Oakland University and the Detroit Women Writers

WHEN: 1 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16; 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES: "Image and Literature: The Traffic in Language" by Thomas Lynch, 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17.

WORKSHOPS: Manuscript critiques, fiction, dramatic writing, working with an agent, freelance writing, children's literature, essay writing, desktop publishing and more.

FEES: \$35-\$75, depending on session and program; (248) 370-3125.

Books by Thomas Lynch

■ "Skating with Heather Grace," a book of poems

■ "Grimalkin & Other Poems"

■ "The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade," a book of essays

■ "Still Life in Milford," a book of poems

ART SHOW

'Our Town' exhibit — a summit for benefactors, artists



Oriental mirage: Barbara Abel's photograph, "Sinto Offering."

By FRANK PROVENZANO
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Even in the local art scene, the Big Three are conducting a restructuring campaign.

Far from the heated competition of the auto industry, high-ranking execs from General Motors, Ford and Chrysler will go head-to-head-to-head.

But this time, they'll be on the same side.

In what sounds like a philanthropic monopoly, The Community House of Birmingham has assembled a stellar lineup of corporate celebrities to attract benefactors to the 13th annual "Our Town Art Exhibit & Sale," held Thursday through Sunday.

Newly named GM president and chief operating officer G. Richard Wagoner Jr. will join top Ford executive Ed Hogenlocker and Tom Stallkamp of Chrysler at a gala preview of the exhibit Wednesday.

The three executives and their spouses serve as co-chairs of the exhibition's

benefactors committee.

Over the last three years, the exhibit has increased benefactor support from 192 to 515 patrons this year. That translates into more money at the largest fund-raiser for the nonprofit organization, which provides a meeting place and a range of educational and "social enrichment" programs for local residents.

While the annual exhibit is expected to bring in \$130,000, the show has another purpose.

"Our mission is to be open to everyone, and for the public to see a diverse range of art," said Shelly Roberts, executive director of The Community House.

The emphasis of the exhibit, said Roberts, is on recognizing local artists and presenting mainstream art in an exhibit intended to deflate any elitist notions that "art" is restricted to galleries and museums.

There will be an assembly line of art hung in salon style along the walls, hallways, stairwells and ballrooms at



Wheelchair painting: This abstract art work was created by using a roller device attached to a wheelchair.

Auction funds arts, sports for disabled

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Charlie Martin never saw the car coming the night he ran out of gas after rehearsing with Bob Seger's band. Five weeks later he awoke in the hospital to realize the driver with no lights had crushed the lower part of his body leaving him paralyzed.

Eighteen years later, Martin is making a comeback. He's traded in his drums for a keyboard and is busy preparing for one of the most important performances since the days he played drums with Seger — a gala evening and auction to benefit Very Special Arts Michigan and Special Olympics Michigan on Friday, Oct. 16, at the Roostertail Club in Detroit.

If you're looking for a piece of art for your home or sports memorabilia, the Art and Soul Auction is the place to be.

A bowl by Farmington potter John Glick, watercolors by William Bostick and Louis Redstone, photography by Jack Olds, a former Livonia Arts Commissioner and sculpture by Sergio De

Giusti of Redford are just a few of the art items to go on the auction block.

The Elizabeth Stone Gallery in Birmingham is donating a print from H.A. Rey's "Curious George" children's book. There will also be art by children and emerging artists previously exhibited in a Very Special Arts exhibit that annually tours the state. For sports enthusiasts, there's a Detroit Pistons jersey autographed by Joe Dumars, Detroit Red Wings' items, a weekend ski package at Treetops Resort, a two-night stay at the Hotel Troquais on Mackinac Island, and a suite for a Piston's game. Martin's donating a pair of

WHAT: Very Special Arts Michigan and Special Olympics Michigan host an art and sports memorabilia auction to benefit their organizations.

WHEN: 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16.

WHERE: Roostertail Club, 100 Marquette, Detroit.

COST: \$50 per person, \$100 for patron. For more information, call (248) 425-1080 or (800) 644-6404.

WHAT: "Our Town Art Exhibit & Sale," a show of Michigan artists.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday & Saturday, Oct. 16-17; 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18.

WHERE: The Community House, 380 S. Bates Street, Birmingham; (248) 644-5832. Admission: Open to the public.

EVENTS:

■ Gala Preview — 6-9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14

■ "Art and Jazz" — 6:30-9:30 p.m.

■ "Artist demonstrations" — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17

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Please see EXHIBIT, C2