

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Exhibits show local artists of all mediums

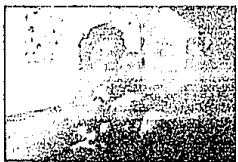
Artists aren't letting March doldrums get them down. They're too busy creating, exhibiting, and attending classes and meetings. Many artists have found that these classes and clubs strengthen their skills and provide venues to show their work.

From Farmington to Livonia and Plymouth, there are seek by local opportunities to view paintings and photography being done by local artists. Here's a guide to what's going on:

VAAL student exhibit

The watercolors are vibrant and bright in a show of work by Edwe Joppich's students in the Fine Arts Gallery at the Livonia Civic Center Library through Thursday, March 30. Joppich, a well-known Farmington Hills artist, has been teaching her "Creative Approach to Watercolor" class at the Visual Arts Association of Livonia for 25 years. She currently is exhibiting work in her 31st one-woman show at the Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame in Lansing through Sunday, April 2. For information and directions, call (517) 494-1890.

"Mixing all levels of experience in one class is helpful to everyone," said Joppich. "It's a very academic approach. Each project adds to their experience. They all have talent but they have to learn to challenge themselves."



New life: Staci Miron holds her six-month-old son Paul, the inspiration for the exhibit of art works behind her.

The show is unified by a theme - flowers. The class began by doing collage and then transposing it into watercolor. The result is a variation of patterns coming together in one work. Not to be missed is Canton artist Kay Rowe's "Island Exotics." Iguanas seem to come out of nowhere to surround a huge pink hibiscus.

"Each of these have elements from the student's life," said Joppich. "You paint yourself. No matter what the painting, you are in the painting."

The VAAL show is one of three sponsored by the Livonia Arts Commission in two venues every month. Next door to the gallery in the circular showcases is a whimsical exhibit by the Michigan Doll Makers Guild continuing through Thursday, March 30.

Members of the Palette Guild exhibit primarily realistic works with a dash of expressionism through Friday, March 31 at Livonia City Hall. Westland artist Annalee Davis shows a multiple portrait of the cat for which she is famous.

Livonia Camera Club

There's something for everyone in the Livonia Camera Club exhibit continuing to Friday, March 24 at the Plymouth Community Arts Council. The color and black and white photography focuses on subjects ranging from lighthouses to sunsets and still life. The Livonia Camera Club meets at 8 p.m. on the first three Thursdays of the month at Grant Elementary School in Livonia.

Leo K. Price's photograph is like a still life painting. Livonia photographer Kelly Debon captures the golden light in an inside view of the dome at the State Capitol building. Said A. Moosani's close-up look at three calla lilies sets a somber mood in black and white. Not to be missed is Richard

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... PHOTOGRAPHER AIMS TO CAPTURE LIGHT

PHOTOS BY JAMES L. AHO
STORY BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN



James L. Aho sometimes goes to extremes when he wants to capture a subject with the lens of his camera. An umbrella in the left hand, camera in the right, the Westland photographer snapped a portrait of legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck in the pouring rain during the 1999 Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival. Minutes later, the performance was stopped for fear the musicians would be electrocuted.

Brubeck, Kenny Burrell, Elvin Jones, and Kenny Garrett are a few of the images in a 30-year retrospective of Aho's work at Focus: HOPE in Detroit.

The official photographer for the Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival (renamed the Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival) through the display of 58 photographs capably telling the story behind each image. The photograph of Brubeck holds memories of the first time Aho heard a recording by the jazz great at 10 years of age. Aho's love of the American art form ever since. But Aho's exhibit goes beyond capturing performers at Montreux Detroit. It's all about "A Quality of Light."

Process

Aho gets lost in the process of creating images that challenge his skills. It took him two hours to find his way out of the woods after photographing a lone wildflower growing amidst

follage on the forest floor of the Bald Mountain Recreation Area near Lake Orion.

While photographing the interior of a rustic cabin, or a student kneeling in the rectory of St. Anne's Church in Detroit, Aho uses natural light to bathe his subjects in tranquility.

"Two things that attract me are the quality of light - how light caresses," said Aho. "And simple subjects. I love simple subjects that evoke an emotional response. There's almost always a serenity in all of these."

From a self-portrait taken 30-years ago in Birmingham, to the roof of a Canton Township barn that has long since been torn down, the images record Aho's history. The photograph of a shop window, piled with boxes of Trend detergent in Dearborn, was taken



Jazz pianists: Taslimah Bey (above left) and Carla Bley were two of the performers at Montreux in 1999.

while mentoring students in a Focus: HOPE photography project. Aho came up with the idea for the annual series of workshops while carrying out his duties as manager of Focus: HOPE's communications department. "Focus on the Mission" exposes high schools students from the tri-county area to cultural diversity.

"I don't capture these subjects to document," Aho said. "It's something I'm responding to emotionally."

Influences

One of Aho's earliest influences was Ansel Adams whom he met at a 1974 reception for an exhibition by the master lensman in an old white



Memories: One of the Westland photographer's favorite portraits is of his daughter Kelley, now age 24.



Historical element: Architectural details from structures across the U.S. can be seen in James L. Aho's one-man show.



Heartfelt: This portrait is another favorite because it features his wife of 30 years - Karen.



Barkless tree: James L. Aho captures a variety of subject matter including nature.



"A QUALITY OF LIGHT"

What: Three decades of photography by James L. Aho.
When: Through Monday, April 3. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
Where: Focus: HOPE Gallery, 1400 Oakman Boulevard, Detroit. Call (313) 494-6500 for information.



Hot time: James L. Aho captured the moods of drummer Elvin Jones (above) and Kenny Garrett at the event now known as the Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival.

house in Birmingham known as the 831 Gallery. The space, now located on North Woodward, became the Halsted Gallery. Aho still has the poster from the exhibit by Adams.

"He emphasized visualizing on what you're shooting, what you want to end up as the print."

Aho fell in love with photography after buying his first camera shortly

after graduating from high school. Before long, he was doing his own darkroom work. In the '70s and '80s, Aho was almost never without the camera he kept loaded on the passenger seat of his car. He shot primarily in black and white during those early days.

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CONCERT

Dancers balance program with ballet and modern

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Heather Fountain will tell you in no uncertain terms that the senior company of Dance Ensemble West deserves to perform in the Gala Concert at the Michigan Youth Arts Festival in Kalamazoo in May.

But before they do, the Plymouth-based dance company will preview "Six Souls," their winning piece, in a spring concert Saturday, March 25 at the Plymouth Canton Little Theater.

features a combination of ballet and modern dance by members of the apprentice, junior and senior companies.

"They worked hard and were among the three chosen from the 16 pieces adjudicated in East Lansing in February," said Fountain. "This is the third year they've been adjudicated into the festival which features students from around the state. Our spring concert is a great opportunity for them to showcase their talent. It's better than a

"DANCE COLLECTION 2000"

What: A concert of ballet and modern dance works.
When: 3 p.m. Saturday, March 25.
Where: Plymouth Canton High School Little Theater, 8415 N. Canton Center Road, south of Joy Road.
Tickets: Donation \$9 per person, call (734) 420-4430.

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Spring concert: Dance Ensemble West's senior company: Valerie Miller (left to right, standing), Colleen Badgero, Heather Fountain (director), Andrea Miller, Lindsay Conklin (left to right, seated) Christen Ogden and Anne Bresler.