

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Artists happy to let audience judge their work

Artists like Nancy Walls Smith are applauding the trend toward non-juried shows, which allow members of groups such as Three Cities Art Club and the Visual Arts Association of Livonia to display their work if they so choose. As an exhibitor with Three Cities Art Club and chairwoman of its spring show May 26-28, Walls Smith thinks the absence of judging before entry encourages creativity, especially in fledgling artists.

But viewers can decide for themselves. The majority of the art exhibited in such shows is good as well as reasonably priced, which makes it even more attractive. Most artists know when work is not up to par and won't exhibit until their skills improve.

"Juried shows sometimes reflect the basic personal taste of a specific juror," said Walls Smith. "The Three Cities show is judged for prizes, but members are never juried out. In that way, the public gets to view a cross section of the type of work each of our members is doing."



Children's Day: Elbert Weber painted this vibrant watercolor after a trip to Kyoto, Japan.

Watercolor

Walls Smith is looking forward to exhibiting a watercolor painted in memory of her son, Jason Alan Smith. The Three Cities show will be judged by Eugene Smith, an art teacher for Wayne-Westland Schools. In addition to a Best of Show and Grumbacher Award, Smith will award

Art shows

Three Cities Art Club presents its 43rd annual spring show 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, Saturday, May 26-27, and until 5 p.m. Sunday, May 28, at the Plymouth Cultural Center, 525 Farmer St. The Visual Arts Association of Livonia continues its spring art exhibit through Wednesday, May 31, in the lobby of Livonia City Hall, 33000 Civic Center Drive. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

represent the beauty of his life. It is the club that helps Walls Smith continue to work through the grief after Jason's death. That's why she's such a strong advocate of the group, which was founded in Plymouth in 1957.

Three Cities Art Club held its first outdoor exhibit in 1957 in Kellogg Park in Plymouth. The name comes from the group of Plymouth, Northville and Livonia artists who founded it to promote an appreciation of creative art in the community.

"It's the only art club in the Plymouth-Canton community," said Walls Smith. "Hopefully our show will be a draw for the many other talented artists in the area to join us and share their gifts. We are not a high-profile group at this time, but we would certainly welcome the opportunity to become one by adding new artists to our roster."

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Inspired by ancestry: Patricia Gardner bases her contemporary clay work on traditional American Indian art.

A JOURNEY OF THE SPIRIT

NATIVE AMERICANS CREATE TRADITIONAL BEAUTY

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Adrienne Brant James stood tall and proud as she gazed around the Woodland Indians Trading Post and Indian World. The contemporary paintings, traditional bendwork and pottery were all created by her people.

From the earth these artists create beauty. Their spiritual journey is showcased in an exhibit of the same title through Saturday, June 10, at the gallery-like space in Redford.

Brant James wants viewers to "experience the culture and creativity of America's first peoples." That's why she invited artists representing Woodland Indian tribes such as the Odawa, Ojibwa, Ojilwe, Mohawk, and Cherokee. These Native American artists will exhibit their work in a group show. Included in the show are large acrylics by her late mother, Hazel Brant Meil, a Mohawk; paintings by Nora Chapa Mendoza, a West Bloomfield artist and Coahuiltecan Indian, and clay by Plymouth potter and Mohawk Patricia Gardner.

Different attitude

"Native artists have a different attitude toward their work," said Brant James. "They're not interested in selling it but the journey of creating it. They always treat their materials as sacred. If they take something from Mother Earth, they give something back."

The show represents the three major groups of Native Americans living in the area: The Three Fires Council (Odawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwa) is second in size only to the Iroquois, which consists of six nations or tribes, among them the Mohawk. Ron Curley, a Mohawk of Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, carves the creation story from a deer antler. An eagle soars above an evergreen in the majestic piece springing forth from a soapstone carving of a turtle. S. Kay Young represents the

third-biggest group in the area — the Cherokee. Her color photographs of the Everglades and the Hudson's implosion reveal an energy similar to that found in the flower and garden life images she exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts three summers ago. The yellow-and-red feathers of ceremonial regalia dazzle the viewer with its vivid color and movement.

Indian ancestry

Patricia Gardner treasures her roots as a Mohawk. If it weren't for summers spent on Six Nations Reserve with her aunt, Sylvia Smith, a well-known ceramist, the Plymouth resident might never have begun to work in clay. Those early years led to her love for traditional pottery, which influences her work today. Gardner's large sculptural vessel at the front of the gallery bears a strong resemblance to traditional Iroquois pottery. Gardner accents the corners of the earth-colored work with faces representing the four directions.

"It's a traditional piece used long ago, the shape and design," said Gardner, who began working in clay in 1979. "It's a feast bowl. The guardian faces represent the four directions. We use the four direc-

tions a lot in our religion."

It's apparent by looking at Gardner's figurative vessel, "Praying Woman," and a yellow horse wall sculpture that she's learned from some of the best artists working in clay.

She studied raku and hand-built ceramics with Robert Pipenburg at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills; wheel-thrown ceramics with Bob Black at Schoolcraft College, Livonia; ceramics and fine arts with Kathy Dambach and Annette Siffin at Henry Ford Community College, Dearborn; and three-dimensional design and ceramics at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"I try to pull on the themes of Indian women and legend," said Gardner. "It's contemporary in that I use modern techniques. They didn't have kilns 500 years ago. Their clay was pit fired. I use high fire, and that way it doesn't chip when transporting."

Functional art

Several of the artists in the show create art that can be used every day. Soapstone carvings from Six Nations serve a function in addition to adding beauty to an interior. The amudges pots are used to burn sweet grass to purify the air or for meditation purposes.

Joyce Barner Tinkham's delicate bead work colors jewelry with Native American design that can be worn as well as displayed on a shelf. A Nigra's Indian, Barner Tinkham shows mastery of the needle in the pillows, purses, vests and a dress sporting a turtle pattern. Ceramics by Mohawks Elda, Leigh and Steven Smith of Talking Earth Pottery tell stories.

Works by Arnold Aron Jacobs, Onondaga; Le'Ana Asher, Ojibwa; David Shananaquet, Odawa; and Thomas B. Maricle, Mohawk round out the offerings in *Spiritual Journey*. Not to be missed is the turquoise palette found in Le'Ana Asher's portrait of an Indian child. Asher, an Ojibwa, received her bachelor of fine arts degree from Eastern Michigan

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Religious roots: Nora Chapa Mendoza exhibits paintings and images from her new series of retablos which are encased in frames from Mexico.

PROFILE

Park West Gallery expansion brings art to the masses

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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The thick scroll of blueprints tucked under Albert Scaglione's arm are as dense and tightly bound as Sunday's rolled-up *New York Times*. But there's hardly any need to study diagrams to chart the course ahead for Park West Gallery, a business Scaglione established in the late 1970s that has flourished into a \$100-million privately-owned company making profits in international auctioneering and catalogue art.

Don't think for a moment that Scaglione hasn't charted every step of the business he started as a one-employee, one-room gallery when Tricky Dick roamed the west wing, and the Internet was sci-fi fantasy.

It's hardly a coincidence that Scaglione, who holds a doctorate in mechanical engineering, has organized Park West Inc. into a proficient, high-

yield revenue machine that has been increasing profits at a rate of 30- percent per year since the mid 1990s. Impeccably groomed in a navy pinned-striped suit, Scaglione clutches the roll of blueprints more as a prop than a guide.

When the timing is right, he unrolls the bundle of translucent paper that outlines the expanded look of Park West, alternately pointing to the diagrams of floor plans and places in the gallery that will be transformed as the Southfield gallery expands to a sprawling 60,000-square feet by the end of the year.

By then, Park West will certainly have the look and feel of a museum.

Lasting showpiece

Only a few other privately owned galleries in the country, according to Scaglione, will be able to claim being larger, in terms of space or revenue. And, Scaglione quickly points out, only the large, tier-one auction houses like Sothe-

by's and Christie's generate more sales and revenue.

Designed by Ukrainian artist/architect Anatole Krausnyansky, who worked on the renovation of the Hermitage Museum, the expanded space will add seven galleries and an ethereal classical aesthetic with Corinthian-style columns and limestone floors.

"The gallery is a showpiece for us," said Scaglione, whose much-publicized palatial home a few minutes drive away in Farmington Hills also could be characterized as a main attraction.

"What we'll have is something that will be around for 100 years. But I wouldn't say the gallery is going to be like a monument. It's more like a tree that's grown, whose roots started growing 20 years ago when we moved to this location."

There are vestiges of the late 1970s in the strip mall where Park West is located.

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Albert Scaglione